Tekeste Negash

ITALIAN COLONIALISM IN ERITREA, 1882—1941

Policies, Praxis and Impact

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Abstract

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This dissertation has two tasks. The first task is to assess the political impact of colonialism on Eritrean society through an analysis of colonial economic, educational and native policies as well as praxis. The second task is to sketch a partial theory of colonialism.

An analysis of colonial policies and praxis (in chapters two to four) reveals the salient features of colonialism to be 1) the subjugation of the economy of the colony to the needs of the colonizing power; 2) the implementation of an educational policy with the intention of perpetuating colonialism, and 3) the definition of relations between the colonizer and the colonized in immutable terms. On the basis of these features, colonialism may be described as a system of domination established by military conquest in the interest of the colonizing power. Its objectives are the domination and subjugation of the colony and its inhabitants.

The obvious question such a definition raises is the purpose of domination. Did the Italian ruling classes embark on colonization solely driven by the yet unexplained and perhaps inexplicable desire for domination? If the decades after colonization can throw any light on the motives of colonialism, it is that colonies and peripheries were not essential for capitalist development of the colonizing countries. Moreover, neither the duration of the colonial period nor the degree of restructuring brought about by colonialism could explain the demise of colonialism.

Since Italian colonialism was replaced by British colonialism in 1941, the analysis of the political impact of colonialism on Eritrean society is based on a hypothetical argumentation where the question is framed as follows: Had the Italians not been replaced by the British, what would their impact have been on Eritrean national consciousness? An examination of the records of the various Eritrean political parties (1946—48) preserved in the Public Records Office (London) and those related to British administration in Eritrea reveal that there was virtually no nationalist organization that articulated a desire for Eritrean independence within the boundaries that existed up to 1936. Fifty years of colonial rule were neither long enough nor sufficiently profound to bring about a political transformation that could be described in terms of Eritrean nationalism.

Key concepts: interpretations of colonialism, motives of Italian colonial expansion, political economy of colonialism, colonial educational policies and praxis, native policies and praxis, resistance to and collaboration with colonial rule, colonial impacts, partial theory of colonialsm.

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To the memory of my Mother,
Birikti Mehari,
who died too early

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PREFACE

This study would not have been completed without the constant pressure, guidance and inspiration of my supervisors Ann-Sofie Ohlander, Eva Österberg and Sven Rubenson. The legendary support and faith of Sten Carlsson was also of great importance. From Michigan State University, where I once studied, I had the rare blessing of the sustained interest and support of Harold Marcus.

I have benefited considerably from comments given by Carl Göran Andræ and Rolf Torstendahl.

It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge profound gratitude to my Department of History which provided me with all the assistance that a research student in a Swedish environment could ever wish to expect. In particular I would like to mention Monica Blom, Ann-Britt Nyström, Kenneth Ljung, Mats Åberg, Gudrun Ericsson, Harald Runblom, Christer Öhman, John Rogers, Ragnar Björk, Carl Johan Gardell, Marie Clark Nelson, Gisli Gunnlaugsson, Eric De Geer and Ingrid Åberg.

I also tender warm thanks to the staff of the University Library, Carolina Rediviva and of the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies for their excellent services as well as for their inexhaustible patience.

I am highly indebted to SAREC (Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries) for a generous grant that made it possible to carry out research journeys to Italy and Great Britain. Without the financial support of SAREC, the completion of this undertaking would have been greatly delayed.

In Rome, the librarian of the Istituto Italo-Africano, Carla Ghezzi and her assistants Enrica Marianella, Umberto Giorno and Sonia Monaco showed me, through their enthusiasm and friendship, an aspect of Italy which did not exactly match with the colonial sources and my interpretation of them. In Luigi Goglia, the historian of Italian Fascism in Africa and in Sandro Triulzi, I had a constant source of inspiration and guidance. At the Swedish Institute in Rome, Carl Nylander and Kerstin Magnoni, besides providing me with accommodation, mediated on my behalf with the Italian archival authorities. At a more personal level, Carla Ghezzi, Giovanni and Anna Bussi, and Marco Guadagni and his family made my several journeys to Italy a pleasant experience. To them all, I express my deep gratitude.

More than anyone else I am aware of the inadequacies of this study. In-

itially, I had planned to concentrate more on colonial praxis than on policies. I had expected the Eritrean Archive (Archivio Eritrea) shipped to Italy in 1947, to contain sufficient material for the task. This expectation was, however, partially frustrated. The files that I checked did not contain the kind of sources I expected. Moreover, many files that might have proven useful were inaccessible for two reasons. Firstly, the fifty-year rule was applied arbitrarily by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs thus preventing my access to archive material from later than 1933. Secondly, since many files contained material stretching from the 1890's until the late 1930's, I was denied access to them. My efforts to explain the arbitrariness of the rule proved unsuccessful.

As this is the first study to deal in a single volume with most aspects of Italian colonialism in Eritrea, I have been compelled to let close scrutiny of several important issues give way to a more general treatment. Its relevance, if I may point it out at this early stage, lies in that it provides an interpretation of colonialism as well as a point of departure for a series of studies on the Italian period of Eritrean history — a research field that has yet to be developed.

The Africanist Christopher Steed has edited my English; Tony Klein and Alex Davidson assisted me with proof-reading. Conny Holmqvist drew the graphs and reconstructed the maps after sketches by Eric De Geer. Robert Sahlström, my father-in-law, was of great assistance in checking the technical aspects of footnotes and bibliography. The complicated process of preparing the manuscript for the printers was carried out by Berit Sahlström.

While acknowledging their assistance, I need to mention that I am solely responsible for any remaining errors.

I want to thank Weini Kahsai, Claartje Aarts, Tebe Hagos, Tibebu Taye, Ingvar Svanberg, Viveca Halldin-Norberg, Yemane Misghena, Svein Ege, Weldu Tsegai, Per-Ulf Nilsson, Diana Strannard, Jacob Jonsson, Olle Johansson and Ulla Sahlström for their support and friendship.

Finally I wish to express my indebtedness to my wife and dear friend Berit, to my daughters Shishai, Hanna and Miriam who are constant sources of joy and inspiration.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study endeavours to assess primarily the impact of colonialism on Eritrean society, and secondly to provide a sketch for a partial theory of colonialism. The discussion on colonial impact, as well as the outline of a partial theory are based on an analysis of the political economy of Italian colonialism in general and its educational and 'native' policies in particular.

This introductory chapter outlines the pre-colonial economic, social and political landscape as well as a chronology of colonization of the region which from 1890 onwards came to be known as Eritrea. It is followed by a summary of interpretations of colonialism and its motive forces for expansion. Thereafter the scope and methodological considerations are dealt with. A survey of the state of research on Italian colonialism in general and on Italian colonialism in Eritrea in particular is presented. The discussion on sources and source materials is dealt with and this chapter is concluded with a brief delineation of the design of the dissertation.

The Creation of Eritrea: a Synoptic View

In 1869 Italy, through a shipping company, purchased the bay of Assab and gained its first foothold on the African side of the Red Sea.[1] No doubt the decision was influenced by the opening of the Suez Canal, which had brought the Horn of Africa close to the Mediterranean. Nothing, however, came out of this occupation largely because the Italians faced opposition from Egypt which itself claimed sovereignty over the African coast line. Interest in Assab was revived at the beginning of the 1880's as a result of the advance made in diplomatic relations between Italy and the province of Shoa in Southern Ethiopia, where the importance of Assab as a port for the future import/export trade was emphasized. When Assab was formally declared an Italian colony in July 1882, the scramble elsewhere for African colonies had already started.

In 1885 Italy expanded its colonial possessions in the Red Sea from Assab

to Massawa and was given diplomatic and technical assistance from Britain.[2] Italian occupation of Massawa was perceived by the Ethiopian state as an act of bad faith by the British, to whom the Ethiopian Emperor Yohannes had already expressed a desire to annex Massawa.[3] Italian colonial expansion into the Ethiopian highlands, given the international colonialist mood of the period, was taken for granted. Moreover, as the Italians soon found out, the occupation of Massawa isolated from its natural hinterland of the highlands, did not make any sense.

Military encroachments into the Ethiopian highlands were however thwarted at the beginning of 1887 at Dogali, when a reinforcement force of 500 Italian men was annihilated.[4] The Dogali defeat further dragged Italy into the colonial path.

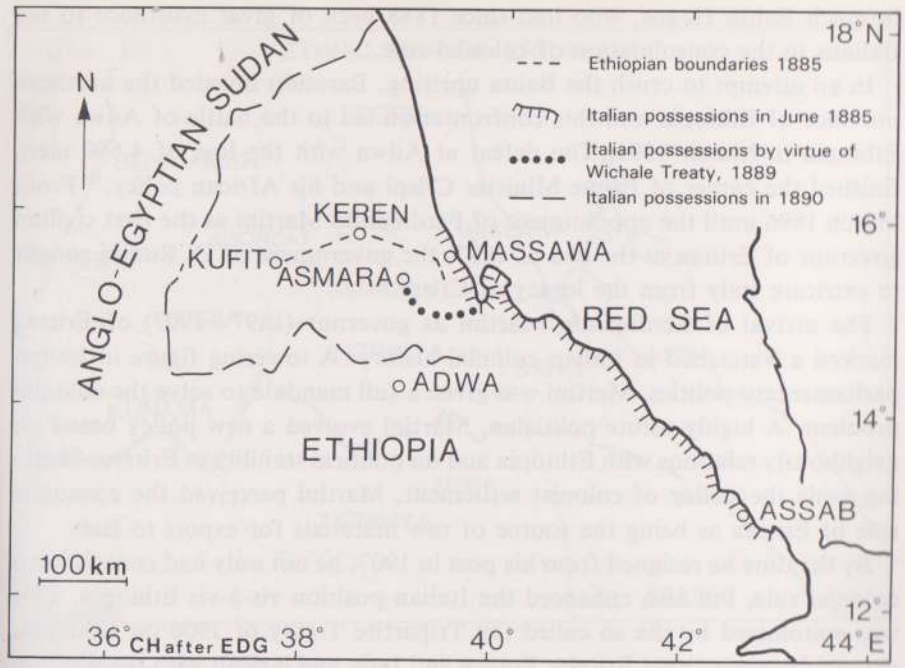
A state of war was declared against the Ethiopian state, while at the same time Italy sought to undermine Emperor Yohannes by arming his political rivals. With their efforts to expand into the highlands blocked, the Italians directed their attention to the north and northwest of Massawa.

Italian expansion into the highlands were greatly facilitated by the political, economic and demographic chaos of 1888 and 1889. These were the drought of 1888 followed by famines and epidemics, the political vacuum created by the death of Emperor Yohannes (March 1889) and the shift of central power from the north to the south of Ethiopia.[5]

In the Italo-Ethiopian treaty of Wichale (Uccialle), May 1889, the Ethiopian Emperor Minilik II agreed to the Italians expanding their colonial territory into the northern part of Ethiopia.[6] Between May and August 1889 Italy expanded its colonial territory well beyond the treaty's provisions, without encountering any resistance. On January 1 1890, these disparate possessions in the Red Sea were consolidated into a single political entity henceforth to be called Eritrea (see map 1).

The chronology of Italian colonialism can be divided into three phases. The first phase began with the treaty of Wichale of 1889 which subsequently led to the creation of Eritrea in 1890. This phase lasted until the battle of Adwa of 1896, an event that compelled Italy to review its foreign and colonial policies. The second phase began in 1897 and continued until 1932. The third and final phase began with the preparations for the invasion of Ethiopia, where Eritrea and its inhabitants played a crucial role, and lasted until the demise of Italian colonialism in 1941.

During the first phase (1889—96) Italian foreign policy in general, and African policy in particular, was dominated by the authoritarian Prime Minister Francesco Crispi. In his hands colonial policy was used as an instrument to consolidate his power, as well as to gain support from southern Italy where the demands for substantial land reforms were being acutely felt.[7] In his famous speech, delivered in the southern city of Palermo on the occassion



Map 1. Phases of Italian Colonial Expansion, 1885—1890.

of the ratification of the treaty of Wichale, Prime Minister Crispi declared:

> Ethiopia extends its hands to us. ... A vast region has been opened to our industry and commerce without any sacrifice of blood. ...Vast zones of land for settlement would in the foreseeable future be offered to the fecund Italian.[8]

In developing the policy of using Eritrea as a means towards solving the land problem in southern Italy, Crispi was assisted by Leopoldo Franchetti, a prominent personality known for his liberal and humanitarian concern over the economic and social crisis of southern Italy.[9]

At the beginning of 1891 a parliamentary commission was dispatched to Eritrea to investigate the possibility of using the colony for Italian settlement. Encouraged by the findings of the commission, Prime Minister Crispi appointed Leopoldo Franchetti as a special parliamentary deputy with the responsibility of turning Eritrea into a colony of settlement. Between 1893 and 1895, as discussed in some detail in the following chapter, vast areas of land were confiscated and set aside for colonist settlement. Franchetti's activities in Eritrea led to serious conflict, firstly with the military governor, General Oreste Baratieri who did not share Franchetti's ambition of settling landless Italian peasants and secondly with the mass of Eritreans. The confiscation of land gave rise to widespread resistance among the Eritrean peasantry against Italian colonialism towards the end of 1894. Eritrean resistance was led by De-

jazmach Bahta Hagos, who had since 1888 been of great assistance to the Italians in the consolidation of colonial rule.

In an attempt to crush the Bahta uprising, Baratieri invaded the northern province of Ethiopia and this confrontation led to the battle of Adwa with Ethiopia in March 1896. The defeat at Adwa with the loss of 4,600 men, finished the career of Prime Minister Crispi and his African policy.[10] From March 1896 until the appointment of Ferdinando Martini as the first civilian governor of Eritrea at the end of 1897, the government of Di Rudini sought to extricate Italy from the legacy of Crispi.[11]

The arrival of Ferdinando Martini as governor (1897—1907) of Eritrea marked a watershed in Italian colonial history. A towering figure in Italian parliamentary politics, Martini was given a full mandate to solve the colonial problem. A highly astute politician, Martini evolved a new policy based on neighbourly relations with Ethiopia and on political stability in Eritrea. Shelving aside the policy of colonist settlement, Martini perceived the economic role of Eritrea as being the source of raw materials for export to Italy.

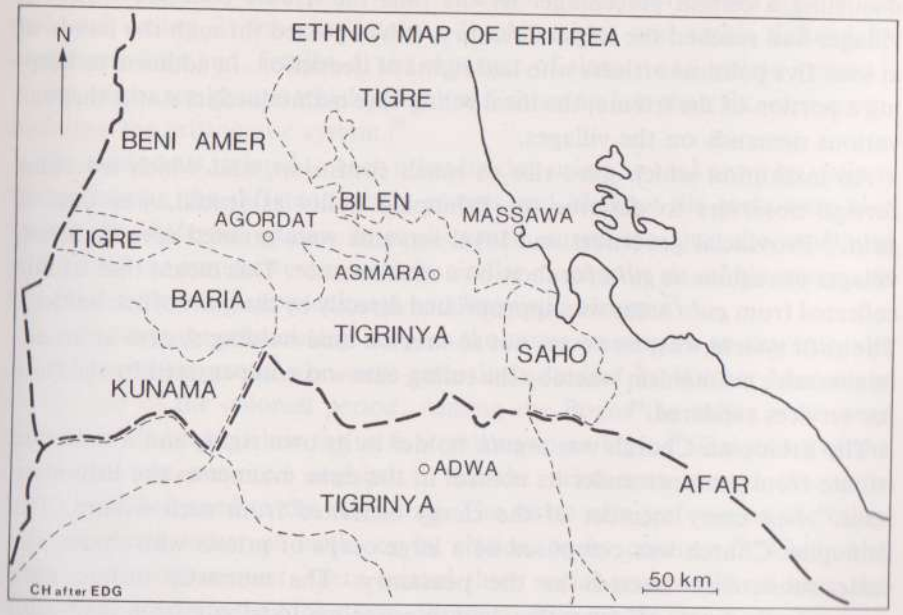
By the time he resigned from his post in 1907, he not only had consolidated colonial rule, but also enhanced the Italian position vis-à-vis Ethiopia. This was epitomized by the so called the Tripartite Treaty of 1906 on Ethiopia, entered between Great Britain, France and Italy and it dealt with the division of Ethiopia into separate spheres of influence.[12]

From 1907 until 1932, successive governors such as Salvago-Raggi (1907—14) and Jacopo Gasparini (1923—28) built their policies on the foundations laid down by Martini. A drastic reorganization of Eritrean society and economy was deliberately avoided during this third phase because of the new economic role assigned to Eritrea. From 1908 onwards Eritrea's role as a supplier of colonial soldiers, first to consolidate colonial rule in Somalia (1908—10) and later in Libya (1912—32), necessitated a colonial policy that had the issue of political stability as its cornerstone.

The fourth phase began in 1932 with preparations for the invasion of Ethiopia, when Eritrea assumed a strategic role of the utmost importance. It was destined to be the staging post for the invasion of Ethiopia. Even more decisive, was that Eritrea was expected to produce the legendary men of arms to assist Italy in the acquisition of an African Empire. The 1932—41 period, as discussed in some detail in the following chapter, transformed Eritrea into a real colony of settlement where the Italians constituted up to 12 per cent of the entire population.

Eritrea contained three distinctly discernible pre-capitalist social formations. These were the semi-feudal, the aristocratic and the egalitarian or democratic social formations.

Organized in about 800 hundred villages, the Tigrinyan semi-feudal society was divided into three main social classes, namely the peasantry, the higher



Map 2. Ethnic Map of Eritrea.

echelons of the clergy and the ruling elite.[13] As a predominantly peasant society the political organization of the Ethiopian state (of which the Tigrinyan state formed a part) was concentrated, to a high degree, upon the modalities for the appropriation of peasant surplus.

This surplus was appropriated through an annual tribute and through various services to the local ruling elite. The relations between the peasantry and the ruling elite can be illustrated by a brief description of the manner of allocation and the collection of tribute. For the purpose of surplus appropriation as well as for administrative purposes the Tigrinyan region was, on the eve of the colonial period, divided into thirty four tribute-paying spatial units known as *medri*.[14] Once a *medri* was assessed for a fixed sum of tribute by the Ethiopian Emperor or his representative, the political officer responsible for the *medri* transmitted the demand to the various spatial groupings within his territorial sphere.

The tribute burden was then shared according to the numerical strength of the villages and according to the relative prosperity of individual peasants.[15] The peasants were assessed for an irregular tribute called *fesses* for the maintenance of the royal army during its sojourn in the area. In periods of war the peasants were in addition obliged to feed and partially equip the army, a task which could easily disrupt the peasantry's subsistence economy.[16] At a village level, tribute was collected by the judge who remunerated himself by

deducting a certain percentage. By the time the tribute collected from the villages had reached the Royal Treasury, it had passed through the hands of at least five political officers who had rights of deduction. In addition to keeping a portion of the tribute, the local ruling elite maintained its status through various demands on the villages.[17]

An institution which gave rise to much confusion, and which led some foreign observers to describe the Ethiopian polity as feudal, was that of *gulti*.[18] Provincial governors and loyal servants were granted specific areas, villages or regions as *gulti* for their own maintenance. This meant that tribute collected from *gulti* areas was appropriated directly by the *gulti* office holders. The *gulti* system was, however, not so much a land-holding system as an administrative mechanism whereby the ruling elite was compensated by the state for services rendered.[19]

The Ethiopian Church was a *gulti* holder in its own right, and it collected tribute from peasants under its control in the same manner as the Ethiopian state.[20] Not every member of the clergy benefited from such tribute. The Ethiopian Church was composed of a large corps of priests who shared the same subsistence hazards as the peasantry. The monastic orders were economically better off since they had direct access to tribute from their *gulti* areas.

Land was owned either by single kinship organizations or by villages, which in essence were groupings of several kingship organizations. In theory, all land was said to belong to the king. However, in reality, this meant that the king had a right to collect tribute from all cultivated land with the exception of *gulti* areas. The ruling elite and the Ethiopian state hardly interfered in the tenure systems limiting themselves mostly to the extraction of surplus. As I have discussed elsewhere, the Ethiopian state, as represented by the king of kings, hardly owned any land in the Tigrinyan region and the possessions of the Ethiopian Church were limited to a few villages.[21]

Relations between the ruling elite and the peasantry appeared to be tolerable during periods of peace. On the eve of the colonial period, as Sven Rubenson has pointed out, relations between the peasantry and the ruling elite had deteriorated so much that they were on the verge of being translated into political rebellion. This was caused mainly by the prolonged demands of the Ethiopian army on the Tigrinyan peasantry during the 1875—88 period when the Ethiopian state, confronted with Egyptian (1875—79) and later Italian armed encroachments, was compelled to maintain a huge army in the Tigrinyan region.[22]

In contrast to the system prevailing among the Tigrinyans, the societal structures of the ethnic groups that inhabited Eritrean lowlands were markedly different. Predominantly dependent on pastoralism for subsistence, their political organizations has been commonly described as aristocratic. The

central features of this system were: 1) a sharp division between aristocratic and serf castes; 2) inherited status; 3) obligations and rights defined by customary laws and, finally, 4) the existence of slavery and a slave system.[23]

Out of the ten groups which inhabited Eritrea no less than six were organized into the aristocratic system.[24]

The aristocrats, related to each other by clan origin, were known by various names among the different ethnic groups and likewise the serfs were also known by different names. It is, however, surprising that the structural features of the system were essentially similar among the six ethnic groups, as they had widely different cultural and linguistic history.[25]

To illustrate the relationship between the castes we may, as an example take the Bogos ethnic group who were extensively studied by Werner Munzinger on the eve of the colonial period. Among the Bogos the ruling caste were known as Shumagle while the serfs were known as Tigre.[26] The status of the Shumagle was acquired at birth.[27] All the aristocrats shared the same ancestry or belonged to the same clan. The status of a serf was on the other hand acquired either at birth, or by choice, or by contract.[28] Within the Bogos territorial context, there existed three social groups. These were the aristocrats, the serfs, and the slaves. Strangers who moved into Bogos country were obliged to enter into a serf relationship with an aristocrat of their choice.[29] Slaves, who were rather rare, were acquired from outside or were former serfs who due to dire circumstances had changed their status.[30]

The obligations of the aristocrat were mainly to provide protection and to represent his serf in all legal cases. In exchange for such protection the serf was obliged to provide a certain amount of produce and several types of services.[31] The status of serf once acquired remained permanent, although the serf reserved the right to change patrons. Furthermore, neither in his accumulation of wealth nor in his movement was the serf restricted by the aristocrat. Soon after the consolidation of colonial rule, some of the serfs appealed to the colonial state to relieve them of their onerous obligations to the aristocrats. This is a clear indication that the aristocrat/serf relationship was antagonistic.[32] The system, however, continued well into the 1940's.[33]

The Saho, the Baria and the Kunama constituted the third pre-capitalist social formation. Although the Saho, as pastoralists, differed greatly in their economic system from the Baria and the Kunama peasants, they are grouped together here because of the close similarities in their political organization. The main characteristic among these three groups was the absence of a ruling elite.[34] Organized around clans, political life among these groups was conducted by a council of elders. The clan was made up of few hundred families and it remained the basic political, social and economic unit. Interclan relations were conducted on an ad hoc basis. The Saho were Moslems while the Baria and Kunama practiced neither Christianity nor Islam. According to the

census of 1931 the Baria and Kunama together formed 4.2 per cent of the population, while the Saho made up another 6.9 per cent.[35]

Matrilineally organized, the political and social organization of the Baria and Kunama have been repeatedly described as democratic and egalitarian.[36] Land was owned collectively and movable property was inherited by the mother's male cousins. Between the early 1860's, when the region was first visited, and Pollera's report in 1913 the political organization of the Kunama and Baria had undergone one major change. The demands of the colonial administration forced the Baria and the Kunama to accept the institution of chieftainship, which was an extremely useful system for the imposition and consolidation of colonial rule.[37]

Theoretical Points of Departure: Interpretations of Colonialism

So far colonialism has been interpreted through two broadly discernible ideological prisms. Firstly, it has been treated as a phenomenon characterized by a huge infusion of European ideas, technology and capital which, albeit in an authoritarian and arbitrary manner, laid down the basis for African modernization.[38] The motives which took Europe into Africa, might or might have not been economic. During the late 19th century, European powers acted with the presumption, which they themselves initiated and elaborated, that Africa did not really belong to Africans. It was 'res nullius', a continent without owners, ready to be shared among those who equated might with right. The Europeans through the colonial system did exploit Africa but they left behind them, when they either could not longer prolong their rule or did not wish to do so, an economic, political and social infrastructure essential to the modernization of the continent. Colonialism was not only an exploitative mechanism but also a heavy burden on its perpetrators since it equally dealt with the material and moral development of the colonized peoples.[39]

Even Karl Marx, in the Communist Manifesto of 1848 as well as in his latter writings on the colonial process, believed that colonialism by its own contradictory logic (destroyer of pre-capitalist systems and creator of new progressive ones) would lay down the basis for the emancipation of colonial society.[40] This interpretation dominated African historiography of the 1960's. Text book writing on African history and the national history of African states were conceived and executed in this optimistic spirit.[41]

The second interpretation, largely based on global analyses of the flow of

capital, interpreted colonialism as the highest and encompassing stage of the subjugation of Africa to the world capitalist system.[42] The impact of this subjugation is that Africa found itself plunged into a phenomenon known as the development of underdevelopment. The dependence of Africa that began in the 16th Century, was further heightened in the 19th and 20th Century with a complete colonial domination. Colonialism integrated Africa to Europe in a relationship of perpetual dependence. Although colonialism in its most blatant form as the political rule over African peoples has gone, it has been substituted in its wake by a more pernicious system, that of neo-colonialism. Africa is still kept dependent by a complexity of mechanisms, one of which is an African elite, who by and large are a creation of the colonial process. This is the classical position of the so-called 'Dependista School of Political Economy', first developed to describe the dilemma of Latin America versus the developed world and soon afterwards carried into post colonial Africa.[43] Another variant of the interpretation hinges on the conclusion that the so-called African dependency is largely the result of what the colonial powers have failed to do rather than of what they actually did.[44]

The issue as to whether European colonialism upon its demise, could continue to plague ex-colonies with economic dependence and underdevelopment has to remain unanswered as it is beyond the scope of this study.

In Search for a Theory of Colonialism

In the historiography of Afro-European relations in the past one hundred years, the terms colonialism and imperialism have often been used to describe the same phenomenon, i.e. the political and economical domination of one country by another. This practice is also common among the adherents of Marxism for whom imperialism has an entirely different meaning. In the writings of classical Marxism, imperialism as developed to a level of theory, is primarily a stage in the development of capitalism. As the highest stage of capitalism, imperialism is characterized by the existence of monopolies and finance capital, the export of capital, the formation of international firms and the territorial division of the world by the main capitalist powers.[45] The Marxist theory of imperialism gives an explanation of why the less developed world was colonized. Although Lenin was not the only one to put out a theory of imperialism he has been credited with giving it the clarity it currently maintains.

The apparent clarity of the concept of imperialism notwithstanding, I prefer to use the simple and uncontroversial term colonialism as a point of departure for a number of reasons. The Marxist theory of imperialism presupposes the existence of a causal connection betweeen the changes which took

place in the structure of the capitalist economic system in Europe after 1870, and the division of the world into colonial empires. This causal connection, as the enemies of the marxist theory readily pointed out, has not been substantiated and it may never be.[46]

Capitalism as a system does not by necessity require colonies, hinterlands or peripheries for its development.[47] The scramble for African colonies for instance, was neither initiated by the biggest capitalist countries nor did all big powers participate. The problem of a causal connection certainly diminishes the value of the theory of imperialism as an explanatory instrument but it does not altogether invalidate the theory. Moreover, the causal connection between capitalism and colonialism does not constitute the central concern of the theory of imperialism.

The theory of imperialism also presupposes that the capitalist system, after having put the less developed world under its control, proceeded first to destroy the pre-capitalist structures in the colonies and then to create the preconditions for industrial capitalism and the building of nation-states. This characteristic of imperialism was first stated by Karl Marx in the 1840's and later repeated by Lenin. Without having to align myself with the well-trodden positions of Wallerstein, Frank, Amin and the many others who wrote on the contrary result of imperialist domination, it suffices to state that this additional aspect of the theory was based on first impressions rather than on concrete appraisal of the colonial situation.[48]

A remarkable point of departure for the study of colonialism is the research of Joseph Schumpeter. From the outset it is important to bear in mind that the author does not make any distinction between imperialism and colonialism. A central theme, which Schumpeter thoroughly examined, are the motives for colonial expansion in general and the 19th century European colonization of the less developed world in particular. At the general level Schumpeter defined imperialism (colonialism) as the objectless disposition on the part of the state to unlimited forcible expansion, a hypothesis which he later developed in his treatment of late 19th century imperialism.[49] Analysing the motives for colonial expansion, Schumpeter repeatedly emphasized the following: 1) a purely capitalist world offered 'no fertile soil to colonialist impulses'; 2) that in a world where free trade prevailed no class could have an interest in forcible colonial expansion ; and 3) that any economic interest in colonial expansion on the part of people or class was not necessarily a product of capitalism.[49] He recognized the importance of protective tariffs in the growth of imperialist policies. Protectionism, argued Schumpeter, made the conflict of interest between nations active in the open world where diplomacy — a non/economic instrument — was given a freer hand. A point Marxist historiography often stressed and Schumpeter corroborated was that protectionism was a motive for colonial expansion. Schumpeter, however, differed

sharply from classical marxist theory by his persistent argument that protectionism was not compatible with a rational development of capitalism and that the interests of those who supported protective tariffs did not stem from capitalism as such.[50]

The policy of colonialism triumphed, according to Schumpeter, due to the failure of capitalism to take radical action on agrarian issues, thus providing a good reason for the reinstitution of tariffs, and by the fact that state organizations were not sufficiently penetrated by the spirit of capitalism. 'The social pyramid of the present age', wrote Schumpeter, 'has been formed not by substance and laws of capitalism alone, but by two different social substances and by the laws of two different epochs'.[51] Colonialism will wither and die with the development of capitalism.[52]

For our purpose, the importance of Schumpeter's study lies in the fact that it provides a more comprehensive explanation first on the atavistic basis for colonial expansion, and secondly on colonialism as a distortion of the rational development of capitalism rather than as a necessary stage in the development of the capitalist system. It can be stated that the scramble for Africa did not in any significant manner provide a necessary stage in the development of capitalism in Europe.[53] Furthermore, the modernizing effect of colonialism envisaged by classical Marxism appeared, on the contrary, to have produced an antithesis, namely the underdevelopment of the colonized world.[54]

I prefer the Schumpeterian model because it does not anticipate any pattern of colonial rule. Schumpeter did not show any interest in how and for what goals colonies were to be used, although as an economist he was fully aware that some section of the capitalist class stood to gain by the acquisition of colonies. In contrast, the theory of imperialism upholds the view that colonialism exploited and destroyed pre-colonial structures while at the same time it lays down the foundations for an advanced mode of production.

This study on Italian colonialism in Eritrea strongly suggests that while the Italians attempted with varying degree of success to exploit the human and material resources, they were not in the least interested in laying down the infrastructure (economical and political) for the interests of the inhabitants of the colony. The premise of colonialism was political and economic domination through the medium of military power and race. It was contrary to the raison d'être of Italian colonialism as I argue in chapter two, to pursue a development policy favourable for the creation of an autonomous colonial society. Free from any logical and economic determinism, Schumpeter's model, I believe, provides a wider leeway to examine colonial praxis.

On the basis of the above exposition we can conceptualize two partial theories of colonialism. They are partial because they limit themselves to explaining the motives as well as methods of colonization exclusively from the European side of the phenomenon. The central question which Schumpeter

and the classical Marxists tried to answer was why Europe found itself in the scramble for colonies. As we discussed earlier, the Marxist theory came up with the presuppositions of a causal or necessary connection between capitalism and colonialism, while Schumpeter argued that colonialism was a distortion of the rational development of capitalism rather than a necessary stage in the development of the capitalist system. A complete theory of colonialism, in addition to dealing with motives, ought to study and explain the process and praxis of colonialism.

Scope and Methodological Considerations

This study has two inter-related tasks. The first task is to explain the praxis of colonialism with a view of providing a partial theory on the subject. Bearing in mind the generality of the concept and the vastness of the source material, the leading question is framed in the following manner. Irrespective of what motivated Italy to acquire colonies, what did Italian colonialism in Eritrea set out to achieve and how did it go about implementing its programme?

The empirical material on colonial objectives and programme is organized around three major issues, namely political economy, educational policy and native policy.

The second task is to assess the impact of colonial rule on Eritrean society. There are two main methodological problems that need to be taken into consideration. The first deals with the object to be assessed. This is less problematic since the earlier chapters on colonial policies and praxis provide sufficient material for the purpose. The second consideration concerns the problem of how to assess the colonial impact. The problem is compounded because Italian colonial rule did not terminate in decolonization, but on the contrary, it was substituted by British military occupation.

The few available studies on the question of impact do not make a distinction between the Italian period (1882—1941) and the British period (1941—52). Moreover, the emphasis is on post-colonial reality as encapsulated at the end of the colonial period. I have endeavoured to confront this problem by constantly keeping in mind the following counter factual question: Had the Italian colonial rule not been substituted by that of Britain, what would the colonial impact had been on Eritrean society? Although a useful instrument, counter-factual argumentation has its own limitations.[55] Thus the analysis and assessment of impact has been kept a level which can be clearly evidenced by the empirical material. In addition, the discussion is narrowed down to the political impact of colonialism on Eritrean society.

At this juncture it is appropriate to discuss the choice of the themes as well as the nature and level of analysis. By 1940 Italian colonialism had reached its apogee of consolidated power over Eritrean society. The Italians were neither kicked out of Eritrea as a result of internal resistance nor were they put in a position whereby they felt that the cost of running the colony was greater than the benefits accruing from it. Although the slow and steady penetration of the capitalist sector did result in the partial or semi-proletarianization of some Eritreans, the degree and extent of change do not warrant detailed studies on themes such as the transformation of social relations. Hence the main theme of this study, while not ignoring the colonial impact, concentrates on the nature and dynamics of colonialism. The question that is constantly kept in mind is how did the colonial system perpetuate its existence.

State of Research

Studies on Italian colonialism in general

Viewed from the Leninist definition of imperialism, Italian colonial expansion was non-imperialist. This is clearly and readily pointed out in the historiography on the subject. For Antonio Gramsci, the founder of the Italian Communist Party and an outstanding interpreter of the evolution of Italian society, Crispi's imperialism was without any economic or financial basis. 'The still immature Italy not only had no capital to export' wrote Gramsci, 'but had to have recourse to foreign capital for its own pressing needs'.[56]

Crispi's colonial policy according to Gramsci was closely 'connected with his obsession of unity, and in it he proved able to understand the political innocence of the south'.[57] The southern peasant continued Gramsci, 'wanted land, and Crispi, who did not want to (or could not) give it to him in Italy itself, who had no wish to go for "economic jacobinism" conjured up the mirage of colonial lands to be exploited'.[58] The policy of colonial expansion was according to Gramsci a device for sidetracking some internal issues of a political and economic nature.[59] In other words, Crispi wished to resolve the land question in southern Italy without any reform measures by keeping the mirage of colonial lands. The ideas of 'proletarian nation', 'proletarian imperialism' and the 'imperialism of the poor' and their variants were, according to Gramsci, developed by southern intellectuals who owing to their feudal background and ideology belonged to the exploiting classes in Italy.[60]

Without departing from the broad Gramscian outline, the Africanist historian Carlo Zaghi interpreted Crispi's colonial policy as a result of several additional factors namely, the economic and financial motives, the passionate

nationalism of Crispi exclusively explained in terms of colonial expansion and what Zaghi called *la spinta militaresca* (the military push).[61] Zaghi is indeed correct about the military as a factor for colonial expansion, especially after its defeat at Dogali in 1887 where the military establishment at Massawa carried out its less publicized wars of revenge in complete disregard of directives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[62] The autonomy of the military was however severely circumscribed by the reluctance of the treasury to supply funds.

Elaborating on the alignments behind Crispi's policy of colonialism, Zaghi stated that there was little evidence for believing that there was a strong alliance between Crispi and the protectionist and capitalist forces. Indeed he felt that the picture resembled more that of economic and financial groups acquising to Crispi's policy of colonial expansion in exchange for a more repressive policy against the lower classes.[63]

Gennaro Mondaini, a towering figure in the history of colonial legislation and a prolific writer between 1910 and 1941 wrote that colonialism was no doubt a phenomenon of a capitalist nature represented not so much by the expansion of capital to the new colonies but by capitalistic greed for the acquisition of the colonial forces of production.[64] Similar view was reiterated as late as 1981 by Luigi Goglia when he wrote that colonialism was never a diversionary strategy but a strategy of a poor nation with little capital for export, directed towards territories which had even less products to exploit.[65]

For Professor Alberto Acquarone, the motives for colonial expansion were deeply rooted in the role of Italy in European life:

> It would have been difficult for the Italians to accept willingly the role of a minor power in keeping with their effective strength, not only because acceptance and success in the club of the great powers was an essential element of the quest for identity which continued to be one of the guiding, if unspoken, forces of Italian national life after unification, but also because Italians were bound to be prisoners of their past. Even leaving aside the myth of Rome (which in its more extreme forms was the monopoly of some exalted and restricted minorities only), the inescapable facts were that Italians had played too vital a role in the history of Europe since Renaissance..[66]

An interpretation very similar to that of Schumpeter is that of Roberto Michels. In his study Michels set out to explain the nature of Italian imperialism as well as its moral basis in the aftermath of Italian invasion of Libya. Imperialism, Michels wrote, was allowed to those nations who have sufficient power to carry it out. This was in brief Michels moral basis for imperialism, a view not very different from that cogently explained by Schumpeter. Having thus established the moral basis, Michels interpreted Italian imperialism as psychological, political and demographic. The psychological factor lay in the fact that Imperialism assisted the Italians to improve their image vis-à-vis other European nations. Politically, the war of Libya was a successful test-case of the maturity of the nation. Italy proved that it was a nation by conducting a war that was supported by all groups. As for the demographic motive, Michels stated that the acquisition of a colony has in no way changed the pattern and extent of emigration. The author was candid enough to add that the first great imperialist motive (the demographic motive) could be said to have failed.[67]

A slightly different interpretation is that put forward by Wolfgang Schieder. Adhering to the theories of social imperialism developed among others by Hans Ulrich Wehler,[68] Schieder argued that the colonial politics of Crispi (1894—96) coincided or immediately followed a period of economic depression.[69] The politics of imperialism (sic.) occures, according to Schieder, at a transitional phase between 'primitive unification' and the perfection of the 'nation-state'.[70] The problems of participation in the political life of groups hitherto unintegrated and those of economic distribution create a conflictual situation which in turn demand a political strategy for their solution. One such strategy, according to Schieder, is that of imperialism, a medium that solves the conflictual situation through the postponement of democratic solutions.[71] Schieder has provided two broad theories for the evolution and implementation of colonial expansion, namely the economic depression nexus and the conflictual situation arising from problems of political integration and economic distribution.

In the Italian case, Schieder argued that the overriding cause for the 'conflictual situation' was the violent population explosion between 1861 and 1911, whereby the population increased from 25 millions to just over 35 millions. The social consequences of what he called the 'violent demographic explosion' was emigration which increased dramatically from 1887 onwards.[72] The phenomenon of emigration provided, Schieder maintained, inspiratory ideas which were later translated into motives of colonialism.[73] Moreover, the political consequence of the demographic explosion brought about the progressive isolation and fragmentation of the ruling class as it was continously pressed by the proletariat, socialist and Catholic groups who up to this time were marginally integrated into the state system. In other words, the political consequence was the further deepening of the 'conflictual situation'. The adoption of colonialism (la politica coloniale) according to Schieder was a means used by the ruling class in order to solidify ideological adherence of the bourgeoisie against the unintegrated pressure groups.[74]

Schieder's assessment might be true during the Italian invasion of Libya in 1911—12. Concerning the earlier period however, the policy of colonialism instead of solidifying ideological adherence of the bourgeoisie further deepened the fragmentation of the ruling class. The bourgeoisie of the north of Italy, previously indifferent to colonial expansion became more vocal against col-

onialism. There might have indeed been a 'conflictual situation', but during the 1889—96 period what appeared even more pronounced was the economic dis-location brought about firstly by the union of two separate economies (those of the north and south) and secondly by the protectionist wars against France.[75] Schieder's characterization of Italian colonialism under Crispi as 'social imperialism' is fully endorsed by G. Carocci in his thematic study of Italian history.[76]

For the Italian Marxist historian Giorgio Candeloro, Crispi's policy of colonial expansion was not only a result of the latter's passionate conception and rhetoric of the greatness of Italy, but also and above all it was the result of the objective economic and social situation, that is to say of the industrial and agrarian block formed in 1887.[77] To the essentially Gramscian interpretation, Candeloro introduced a new factor namely that of the role of the shipping and armaments industries on the evolution of the policy of colonialism as later expressed by Crispi. As the economic depression gave way to recovery from the end of 1894 onwards, the industrial group that supported Crispi's colonial ambitions became relatively weaker vis-à-vis the textile, chemical and electrical sector most of which was based in the north. From 1895 onwards, Candeloro argued that the northern bourgeoisie anxious for stability, lined itself with the radicals and the socialists against colonial adventures and expenditures. Crispi, who was keenly aware of the allignment of forces against his colonial policy pushed the ill equipped Italian army to secure a victory for himself and the monarchy.[78]

Crispi's passionate belief in the politics of greatness of Italy (*la politica della grandézza d'Italia*) meant in concrete terms extensive subsidy and protection of the heavy industries i.e. shipbuilding, armaments and steel on the one hand, and the extension of authoritarianism on the other.[79] His protectionist policy, initially caused by the need for more funds to finance colonial wars of attrition against Ethiopia, played a decisive role in the establishment and consolidation of heavy industries. Northern industries exploited the favourable protective umbrella and expanded their market throughout the peninsula. In the south, however, Crispi's tariff wars brought disastrous consequences whereby more and more peasants found it virtually impossible to make ends meet.

Crispi's protectionist policy described by Gramsci as that of 'manufacturing the manufacturer'.[80] laid down the basis for an industrial Italy which in the opinion of at least one author saved it from being condemned to the status of a raw material producing nation.[81] The south, meaning the economic and political elite, went along with Crispi's policy because it suited its interests. According to the insightful summation of the parlamentary historian Francesco Brancato, the southern bourgeoisie found in Crispi a true representative of their aspirations and saw in his 'fist of iron' policy (*pugno di ferro*),

a security against dangerous uprisings from the masses. In Crispi's colonial policy of expansion the south also saw a possibility for an outlet to the growing political restlessness while at the same time the southern bourgeoisie used colonialism as a sort of political platform to enter into the political life of the state.[82]

Gramsci, Zaghi, Candeloro, Schieder, Carocci for the pre-1900 period and Mola, Grassi, Goglia, Rochat and Naitza for the latter period all perceive a connection between internal conditions and colonial expansion.[83] This connection, however, is neither fully described nor fully assessed. It is my contention that the connection between internal conditions and colonial expansion was firstly very tenuous and secondly the strategy of colonialism failed to achieve its intended objective. If the ruling class with Crispi as its leader expected to control the internal situation of the south by promising free land in the colonies, then it must have admitted the tenuousness of the connection during and after the Fasci uprising of 1893—94.

The Fasci, organizations of agricultural workers and landless peasants in Sicily, were apparently oblivious to Crispi's promise of vast lands in the colonies and not only demanded concrete action on the land question but were about to take the law into their hands. Crispi had three options. The first was to sidetrack the 'conflictual situation' by undertaking a more agressive colonial expansion thus rallying the entire nation behind him. However in order to do so, Crispi had to convince the parliamentarians from the north. The north, described during the period of Crispi as the state of Milan (*L'stato di Milano*) with its preference for commercial and economic penetration would certainly have refused the allocation of more funds for colonial adventure as it did in 1895.[84]

The second option was for Crispi to introduce a substantial land reform, thus democratizing the society but at the expense of the southern bourgeiose. As the opposition from the southern latifundists was a matter of common sense, Crispi did not even try before he played his third option namely that of crushing the Fasci movement by force, killing more than ninety citizens.[85] When Crispi belatedly introduced comprehensive legislation to ameliorate the conditions of the south, the landed bourgeiose together with the parliamentarians of the north buried the bill.[86] In the newly established colony of Eritrea, the policy of settling landless peasants soon became unrealistic and unrealizable partly due to parliamentary control of state funds. Even more, the policy was once and for all revoked by the colonial governor, Oreste Baratieri in the second half of 1895.

There was indeed a conflictual situation that demanded a political strategy for its solution. Since colonial expansion was however only one option available to the ruling class, the existence of a conflictual situation alone does not by itself explain the adoption of colonialism as the viable strategy. In other

words, colonial expansion as a policy did not necessarily follow from the internal conditions prevailing in Italy. Therefore, neither Italian motives for colonial expansion nor the European scramble for African colonies could be sufficiently explained by the Marxist and social imperialist theories of imperialism.[87]

Studies on Italian colonialism in Eritrea

Most of the research can be roughly grouped into four categories: 1) those that emphasize the negative consequences of colonialism on Italian social, political and intellectual development; 2) those that extol and defend direct or indirect the Italian presence abroad and especially in Africa; 3) those of a purely descriptive nature, several of which are of considerable value as source material and finally, 4) the slowly and steadily emerging body of modern research on aspects of Italian colonialism in the colonies, and mostly in Eritrea. Before entering into a detailed assessment of the state of research, I shall comment on the scope and nature of the first two categories. Works under the third category shall be referred and commented in the main text in so far as they prove to be relevant, while those of the fourth category are treated separately below.

Under the first category where colonialism is criticized from its own home ground, the works of Battaglia, Naitza, Del Boca, Mola and Maione are the most notable. While Battaglia and Del Boca wrote that Italian colonialism ran counter against the ideals of the Risorgimento and the rights of all people to independence, Mola, Maione and Naitza argued that Italian colonialism made difficult the democratization of Italian society.

In the second category we find the forty volumes of the *L'Italia in Africa* series published under the auspices of a committee for the documentation of Italian activities in Africa.[88] Created by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the committee planned and carried out its investigation with the expressed aim of defending Italian colonial presence in Africa. Being for the most part not critically documented, these works are of limited historical and research value.

The above mentioned studies share a common point of departure in that they are conceived and written from the Italian view point. Colonialism is either praised or criticized for what it has achieved or failed to achieve for Italy. The African side of the phenomenon is left out. This uni-dimensional aspect of the state of research is also acutely felt in the studies of colonialism in Eritrea. Eritrea was the oldest and by far the most important colony (for the greater part of the colonial period) and yet apart from few works no attempt has been made to study the overall impact of Italian colonialism in Eritrea.

To the fourth category or research belong Alberto Aquarone's studies on Eritrea's first civil governor Ferdinando Martini,[89] although the main emphasis was put on the Italian side of the problem. The most relevant studies under this category are those by Loretta Caponi and Irma Taddia. Caponi's article on the colonial impact on land tenure in Eritrea concentrates for the most part on general colonial policies. Caponi sidetracks her main objective and discusses in great detail the relationship between colonialism and Italian capital accumulation both at home and in the colony. Based exclusively on published primary sources, Caponi concluded that Eritrea became neither an outlet for Italian colonists nor a colony of intensive capital penetration as envisaged by the land law of 1926, which created the legal apparatus for the establishment of vast (up to 10,000 hectares) concessions. In an appendix Caponi reproduced a table of land expropriated between 1893 and 1895, without, however, any note explaining the fact that these were revoked by the land laws of 1909 and 1926. Caponi noted the institution of two types of land laws introduced in 1909, namely lands under Italian law and lands under customary law,[90] but did not discuss the impact of the coexistence of dual systems of tenure on the colony. Carried out within the framework of the Dependista school of political economy[91] Caponi concluded that Italian colonialism in Eritrea brought about the disruption of values and social relations and the continuation of the structure of subsistence economy.[92]

Of great relevance are the studies by Professor Taddia on the transformation of land tenure and on public (of the colonial state) and private capital in Eritrea during the colonial period[93] In the earlier study Taddia has consistently argued that Italian colonialism had brought about profound changes in the structure of property and in the cultivation of land. These views are further reiterated in her most recent book.[94] My main contention with Taddia, lies, however, in the problem of assessing the intensity of colonial impact on Eritrean society.[95] I have argued elsewhere that Taddia has drawn conclusions which can not be supported by the empirical evidence the author herself assembled.[96] Notwithstanding my reservations, Taddia has provided an analysis of the colonial process and an interpretation of the impact of colonialism, both of which are contributions of great significance. Another useful study although outdated, is that of Professor Romain Rainero on early attempts to establish a colony of settlement in Eritrea,[97] where the author argued that Italy was not fully committed to the idea of state-assisted settlement of landless Italian peasants in Eritrea.

On the ideological domain, De Marco's study on colonial educational policy has been an important point of departure.[98] Written during the second world war and based exclusively on published material, the study describes in detail the origin and development of colonial educational policies in Libya and the Horn of Africa, including Eritrea.

Sources and Source Material

The colonial sources constitute the foundation for the reconstruction and study of colonialism in Eritrea. While written Eritrean source material during or after the end of the colonial period is virtually non-existent[99] the recapturing of some aspects of the Eritrean colonial experience through oral interviews is impossible because of the political and military crises of the region.

The most important sources for this study are derived from the historical archives of the former ministry of colonies, Archivio Storico dell'Africa Italiana henceforth referred to as ASMAI, and the local archive of the Eritrean colony. This archive was shipped from Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, to Rome in 1947 with the permission of the British who ruled over Eritrea from 1941 to 1952. Containing material which by its nature is of local interest, the Eritrean local archive deposited in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Archivio Eritrea henceforth referred to as AE, has proved to be of great relevance. Another important archival source is that of the committee for the documentation of Italian activities in Africa (Comitato per la documentazione delle attività italiane in Africa). Essentially made up of material extracted from the ASMAI and AE, the comitato archive maintains the character of a carefully edited and collected source material. Since access to the comitato archive is based on individual permission, the only section which I had the privilege to consult was that on Italian activities in the educational field.

I have also consulted the historical archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome, henceforth referred to as ASMAE. This archive was however not as useful as I had anticipated. Due to the fifty year rule imposed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, my possession of copies of archival source material ends at 1935 with three notable exceptions. My collection on educational policy and praxis, as I mentioned earlier is complete since I had access to the comitato archive. On the political field, for the 1938—41 period, the collection at the State Central Archive (Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Roma) have not only been useful but also gave me a clearer picture of the nature of source material which still remains inaccessible.[100]

My archival collection leaves a great deal to be desired concerning the quality and reliability of data. Most often the source material is too soft to be hammered into a lasting and reliable shape. This I believe is largely because the problems that I have chosen to investigate were of marginal importance to the colonial state. With two illustrative examples I wish to point out the weaknesses of the source material. On the economical domain, we have good source material on internal revenues, on subsidy from Italy and the amount of tribute levied from the population. But the source material fails to come to assistance when we wish to focus our interest on the problems of budget

allocation between provinces and between various sectors of the colonial society. The problem of source material is even more pronounced on the ideological plane. My source material on education, by far the most complete, is paradoxically enough striking for its gaps. Schools were opened and their programmes changed without apparently sufficient motivation. Information on school attendance by age and grade is very fragmentary. Some inevitable gaps notwithstanding, the accessible archival source material as well as the extremely rich published primary material provide a sufficient base to document and analyse the policy and practice of colonialism.

Thematic Organization of the Study

The policies and practice of Italian colonialism are discussed in chapters two and four respectively. The chapter on the political economy of colonialism endeavours to answer questions related to the economic and non-economic functions of the colony and the measures adopted by the colonial administrations to achieve their goals. Eritrea, I argue, was at first expected to function as a colony of settlement. This policy was discontinued because of Eritrean resistance and due to a number of Italian economic and political considerations. Later on, the colonial administration attempted to turn Eritrea into a source of raw materials for Italy. However, before the potentialities of the colony were even fully mapped out, the function of the colony, firstly as an outpost for transit trade and secondly, as a reservoir for recruits to the colonial army, began to assume more importance. Finally, this chapter assesses the importance of Eritrea to Italy.

The study of colonial policies and practice is extended in chapter three to the field of education. In the context of colonial Africa education has been the main, if not the only, instrument which enabled the colonized to perceive themselves as a nation within the territorial limitations imposed by the colonial power and to challenge the moral basis of the colonial system. Cognizant of the political implications of extending western style education to Eritreans, the colonial administration imposed strict limitations on the type and the duration of education available to the colonized. The policy and practice of colonial education, I argue, was one of the main reasons for the virtual absence of a nationalist movement in Eritrea during the colonial period.

In chapter four, relations between the Eritrean and the colonial administration and the position of the former in the colonial system are analysed under the heading colonial native policy and practice. Italian colonialism did not in any manner or at any period anticipate the autonomy and self-government of

the colony. Native policy emphasized the rural nature of the colony and the preservation of Eritrean social organizations. From 1930 onwards, the incorporation of a racialist ideology into native policy, meant that relations between the colonizers and the colonized were defined as perpetual and immutable.

The chapter that deals with the colonial impact is preceded by a discussion in the fifth chapter on the reactions of the Eritrean people to colonial rule. This chapter throws light on the factors which either enhanced the continued presence of the colonial system as well as those that limited the implementation of certain colonial policies. Moreover, it has a great bearing on the discussion of the colonial impact.

The Eritrean peoples' reactions to colonial rule varied and depended largely on their perceptions of the colonial system as well as on their perceptions of their pre-colonial history. An important factor that explains the contradictory responses to colonial rule is, I argue, the pre-colonial relations between the various ethnic groups of the colony. While the Tigrinyans maintained throughout the colonial period a clearly discernible notion of Ethiopian nationalism, the non-Tigrinyans appeared to align themselves with colonial rule and perceived it as a regime of domination concerned primarily with law and order. Dispersed widely in the regions of the colony that were of least importance to colonial economic and political exploitation, the Non-Tigrinyans, who were mostly Moslems, rated the colonial system as more favourable than the Ethiopian system.

The colonial impact on Eritrean society is dealt with in chapter six. The discussion is carried out at two levels. Under the objective impact of colonialism, I argue that the colonial period, i.e. 1882—1941, brought about both a material improvememt and a political stability when compared to the four decades that preceded it. Furthermore, the colonial system through its educational and native practice contributed to the evolution of an inchoate Eritrean identity. The discussion is further continued at a second level by means of a counter-factual method of investigation designed to assess the impact of colonialism on national consciousness. I argue that the colonial period was too brief for its impact to be other than limited.

The final chapter, while summing up the salient features of colonialism endeavours to sketch a partial theory of colonialism.

FOOTNOTES

1. The chronology of Italian piecemeal occupation of the Red Sea coast is fully explained by Carlo Giglio, *L'Italia in Africa: Etiopia/Mar Rosso*, Roma, 1958; pp. 101—24; idem., *L'impresa di Massaua*, Roma, 1955; Roberto Battaglia, *La prima guerra d'Africa*, Torino, 1958, pp. 77—88; Angelo del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, vol. 1, Milano, 1976, pp. 33—49; Raffaele Ciasca, *Storia coloniale dell'Italia contemporanea da Assab all'Impero*, Milano, 1939, pp. 67—251.

2. Giglio, *Etiopia/Mar Rosso*, pp. 350—54; idem., *L'impresa di Massaua*, pp. 41—45. For a fuller account of British role see the slightly outdated but still relevant study by Agatha Ramm, 'Great Britain and the planting of Italian Power in the Red Sea, 1868—1895', *English Historical Review*, 1944, pp. 211—36. See also Sven Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, London, 1976, p. 379.

3. Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, pp. 379—80; Harold Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia, 1844—1913*, Oxford, 1975, p. 78.

4. Battaglia, *La prima guerra*, pp. 230—58; Rubenson, *The Survival*, p. 381.

5. See Richard Pankhurst, 'The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888—1892: A New Assessment', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 21 (1966), pp. 271—96. See also his recent study, *The History of Ethiopian Famine*, London, 1985. See Harold Marcus, *The Life and Times*, pp. 135—36, for an assessment of the impact of famine, the typhus and cattle disease that subsequently followed. For the political crisis in northern Ethiopia created largely by the shift of central power to the south, see Bairu Tafla, 'Political Crisis in Tigrai, 1889—1899', *Africa* (Rome) 34:1 (1979) 101—21.

6. For an exhaustive discussion on the treaty see Rubenson, *The Survival*, pp. 384—87.

7. See the discussion in 'State of research' of this chapter.

8. Francesco Crispi, *Scritti e discorsi politici (1849—1890)*, Torino, Roma, no date, p. 738, quoted in Claudio G. Segre, *Fourth Shore: The Italian Colonization of Libya*, Chicago, 1974, p. 12.

9. Romain Rainero, *I primi tentativi di colonizzazione agricola e di popolamento dell'Eritrea, 1890—1895*, Milano, 1960, pp. 32—35.

10. Figures on Italian casualties differ widely. Conti Rossini in his study *Italia ed Etiopia dal trattato d'Uccialli alla Battaglia di Adua*, Roma, 1935, pp. 448, puts 289 officers and 4,600 soldiers killed. Roberto Battaglia, in *La prima guerra d'Africa*, Torino, 1958, p. 789, footnote 28, on the various figures. Prime Minister Francesco Crispi resigned on March 4, 1896.

11. Alberto Acquarone, 'La politica coloniale italiana dopo Adua: Ferdinando Martini governatore in Eritrea', *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, 42:3 (1975) 346—77; 42:4 (1975) 449—83. One of the alternatives explored by Prime Minister Di Rudini was the handing over of Eritrea to the Belgian king Leopold against acceptable compensation. See Rainero, *L'anticolonialismo italiano da Assab ad Adua*, pp. 352—54.

12. Carlo Rossetti, *Storia diplomatica dell'Etiopia durante il regno di Menelik II*, Torino, 1910, pp. 319—25, for the text of the treaty. For a commentary on its implications see Marcus, *The Life and Times*, pp. 211—12.

13. I have chosen to use the term Tigrinyans to describe the Tigrinya-speakers in Eritrea in order to distinguish them from the rest of Tigrinya speakers in Ethiopia. Prior to the 1840's the Tigrinya speaking region was described by the name of the language i.e. Tigrai. However since Tigrai denotes an Ethiopian province, the term Tigrinyans as used in this study refers only to those Tigrinya-speakers in Eritrea. On the Tigrinyan social structures see Conti Rossini, *I principi di diritto consuetudinario dell'Eritrea*, Roma, 1916, pp. 29—540.

The distinctions between the three classes were however not clear at all. In his travel book on the Abyssinians of whom the Tigrinyans constituted a part, C. Plowden wrote, 'It must be remembered that between the chief and the most rugged of his followers there is no distinction save that of wealth and good fortune...The Abyssinian in all respects is the equal to his chief.' *Travels in Abyssinia*, London, 1868, p. 60. See Gene Ellis for similar views, 'Feudal Paradigm as a Hindrance to Understanding Ethiopia', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14:2 (1976) 275—95.

14. See my study on 'Land Tenure and the organization of Surplus Appropriation on the Eve of the Colonial Period', in *Notes on Nationalism and Resistance in Eritrea, 1890—1940*, pp. 22—36.

15. Ibid., pp. 30—34.

16. Rubenson, *The Survival*, pp. 140—42, 377—78.

17. One of the common services which the local ruling elite demanded was the cultivation of a plot equivalent to that cultivated by a single peasant. Such plots known as the plots of chiefs were cultivated collectively by the village and the harvest handed to the chief. As S. F. Nadel pointed out in the early 1940's, the villages could deny their chief such privilege. 'Land Tenure on the Eritrean Plateau', *Africa* (London) 21:1 (1946) 1— 21, p. 20.

18. Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia*, Oxford, 1972, pp. 100, 102.

19. Ibid..

20. See Dessalegn Rahmato, *Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia*, Uppsala, 1984, p. 19.

21. See my 'Land Tenure and the Organization of Surplus', pp. 31— 34.

22. Rubenson, *The Survival*, pp. 377—78.

23. Carlo Conti Rossini, *I principi di diritto consuetudinario dell'Eritrea*, Roma, 1916, pp. 541—740.

24. These were the Habab, the Marya, the Mensa, The Beni Amer, the Bogos and Afar ethnic groups. For census purposes, the Habab, the Mensa and the Marya were considered as a single group on the basis of common language.

25. For a traditional account of the origin of the ethnic groups see Alberto Pollera, *Le popolazioni indigene della colonia Eritrea*, Firenze, 1935.

26. Werner Munzinger, *Dei Costumi e del diritto dei Bogos*, Roma, 1891, p. 57.

27. Ibid., p. 58.

28. Ibid., p. 56.

29. Ibid., p. 56.

30. Ibid., pp. 56—57.

31. Ibid., p. 60.

32. Ferdinando Martini, *Il diario eritreo*, vol. 4. Entry for December 22 1905, where the Tigre serfs asked Martini to relieve them from their shumagle (patrons) who treated them like slaves. Martini noted that the Shumagle were the necessary intermediaries between the government and the Tigre.

33. Spencer, J. Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, Oxford, 1952, pp. 167—68.

34. Carlo Conti Rossini, *I principi di diritto consuetudinario dell'Eritrea*, pp. 741—802.

35. *VII Censimento generale della popolazione, 21 April 1931*, vol. 5, (colonie e possedimenti), Roma, 1935, p. 38.

36. Carlo Conti Rossini, *I principi di diritto consuetudinario*, p. 747; Alberto Pollera, *I Baria e i Cunama*, Roma, 1913, p. 98.

37. Alberto Pollera, *I Baria e i Cunama*, p. 67.

38. L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *Burden of Empire: An Appraisal of Western Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara*, London, 1967, idem., 'Economic Achievements of the Colonizers: An Assessment', in *Colonialism in Africa*, vol. 4, edited by L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 673—96.

39. Ibid..

40. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Volume 6, 1845—1848, Moscow 1976, p. 488 (Manifesto of the Communist Party); on Marx's perception of colonialism as an emancipatory phenomenon, see Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*, London, 1984, pp. 51—60.

41. Roland Oliver and J. D. Fage, *A Short History of Africa*, London, 1962.

42. The main exponent of the view is the late Walter Rodney's polemical book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London, 1972, a work which traces African dependence to the 16th century. Another contemporary study is also that of Samir Amin, 'Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa: Historical Origin', *Journal of Peace Research* 2:1 (1972) 105—19.

43. The literature is indeed considerable. In addition to Andre Gunder Frank's early study, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, New York, 1967, the studies by Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, London, 1975, and Brett, E.A., *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa*, London, 1973 can be consulted. See also the forcefully argued study of Jean Suret-Canale, 'From Colonization to Independence in French Tropical Africa', in *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940—1960*, edited by Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis, Yale University Press, 1982, pp. 445—81.

44. A. Adu Boahen, 'Colonialism in Africa: Its Impact and Significance' in the *Unesco General History of Africa, vol. 7, 1880 to 1935*, edited by A. Adu Boahen, California, 1985, pp. 782— 809.

45. V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, 1916 (Peking, 1969), pp. 52—104. For a Leninist interpretation of Imperialism see, Tom Kemp, 'The Marxist Theory of Imperialism', in *Studies on the Theory of Imperialism*, London, 1972, edited by Bob Sutcliffe and Roger Owen, pp. 26—29. For a thorough reevaluation of Lenin's theory see Giovanni Arrighi, *The Geometry of Imperialism*, London, 1978.

46. David K. Fieldhouse, *The Theory of Capitalist Imperialism*, London, 1967; Idem. *Colonialism*, London, 1981, pp. 41—42; For a critique of the Marxist theory from within the marxist camp, see M. Barrat-Brown, 'A Critique of Marxist theory of Imperialism', in *Studies on the theory of Imperialism*, edited by Sutcliffe and Owen, 1972, pp. 39—40. Several case studies have pointed out the role of economic motives in colonial expansion without however pushing their analysis so as to demonstrate the existence of causal connection between capitalism and colonialism. See the survey by Barrie M. Ratcliffe, 'The Economics of the Partition of Africa: Methods and Recent Research Trends', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 15:1 (1981) 3—31.

47. See Anthony Brewer, *Marxist theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*, London, 1980 (1984), pp. 44—45.

48. 'The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization', Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Volume 6, Moscow, 1976, p. 488 (The Manifesto of the Communist Party). To a great extent the theories of underdevelopment developed by Samir Amin, *Unequal Development*, New York, 1973, Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, London, 1983, and Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, New York, 1967, challenge the optimistic tone of The Communist Manifesto. See also Barrat Brown, M., The Economics of Imperialism, London, (1974), 1978.

49. Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism: Social Classes*, (1919), New York, 1955, pp. 64, 89, 92. Richard Koebner and Helmut Schmidt use the term imperialism in the sense understood by historians i.e. the act of acquiring and governing colonies. See their study, *Imperialism: The Study and Significance of a Political Word*, Cambridge, 1964. See also Winfried Baumgart, *Imperialism: The Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880—1914*, Oxford, 1982.

50. Schumpeter, *Imperialism*, p. 91.

51. Ibid., p. 92.

52. Ibid., p. 98. Like Marx, Schumpeter adhered to the 'economic interpretation of history' but differed sharply on many Marxian dimensions of the theory. One of the issues on which he differed was concerning the connection between capitalism and imperialism, i. e. colonialism. Whereas Marx argued that colonialism was a stage in the capitalist development, Schumpeter believed that colonialism has nothing to do with capitalism. For a comparative discussion on the views of Marx and Schumpeter see O.H. Taylor, 'Schumpeter and Marx: Imperialism and Social Classes in the Schumpeterian System', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 45:4 (1951) 525—55. See also the review article by Klaus Knorr, 'Theories of Imperialism', *World Politics*, 4:3 (1952) 402—21. For a marxist interpretation of broad views uniting Marx and Schumpeter, see the Introduction by Paul Sweezy to Schumpeter's *Imperialism and Social Classes*.

53. Milward A. and S.B. Saul, *The Economic Development of Continental Europe*, 1850—1914, London, 1977, pp. 503—05.

54. To the extent that the gap between the industrialized countries and the formerly colonized world is growing, it makes sense to speak of underdevelopment and its growth. See for instance Paul A. Baran, 'On the Political Economy of Backwardness' in *Imperialism and Underdevelopment*, edited by Robert I. Rhodes, New York, 1970, pp. 285—301. See also Thomas Stzents, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, Budapest, 1971.

55. David H. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward the Logic of Historical Thought*, New York, 1970, pp. 15—21.

56. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Note Books*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and G. N. Smith, London, 1978, p. 68.

57. Ibid., p. 67.

58. Ibid., pp. 67—68.

59. Ibid..

60. Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, translated by Louis Marks, New York, 1957 (1975), p. 18.

61. Carlo Zaghi, *I Russi in Etiopia*, Napoli, 1972, p. 264.

62. Roberto Battaglia, *La prima guerra d'Africa*, Torino, 1958, pp. 365—72.

63. Zaghi, *I Russi in Etiopia*, p. 264.

64. Gennaro Mondaini, *Politica coloniale e socialismo*, Roma, 1911, p. 8.

65. Luigi Goglia and Fabbio Grassi, *Il Colonialismo italiano da Adua all'Impero*, Bari, 1981, pp. 225—26.

.66. Alberto Acquarone, 'Problems of Democracy and the Quest of Identity', in *Modern Italy: Topical History Since 1861*, edited by Edward R. Tannenbaum and Emiliana P. Noether, New York, 1974, pp. 396—97.

67. Roberto Michels, *Il imperialismo italiano: Studi politico-demografici*, Milano, 1914, p. 140.

68. For a succint summary of the Theory of Social Imperialism see Hans-Ulrich Wehler's paper, 'Industrial Growth and Early German Imperialism', in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, edited by Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe, London, 1972, pp. 71—92. As far as I am able to understand Wehler's thesis, his theory of Social Imperialism does not explain fully German motives for colonial expansion. This inadequacy comes out clearly when he writes:

> There is little doubt that the open-door policy remained Bismarck's ideal. ... If England and France had guaranteed free trade in Africa, unrestricted commercial expansion would have satisfied Bismarck's economic aims. But the crucial reasons which induced him from 1883—84 onwards to acquiesce in a gradual formalization of imperial control were two fold: on the one hand the internal pressures resulting from the crisis were mounting and had to be reduced; on the other, the end of free trade era overseas appeared imminent. (p. 81)

Without disputing the seriousness of the German internal crisis, it appears to me that German colonial policy was inspired more by British and French activities in Africa than by internal crisis. In other words, it was after Britain and France had begun the scramble for Africa that Bismarck started to appreciate colonialism as a strategy for consolidation of his rule. In the context of Swedish Historical Research on the Theory of Social Imperialism see Jan Larsson, *Svenska exportsträvanden på Kina, 1906—1916*, Uppsala, 1977.

69. Wolfgang Schieder, 'Fattori dell'imperialismo italiano prima del 1914—1915', *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 3:1 (1972) p. 8.

70. Ibid., p. 9.

71. Ibid..

72. Ibid..

73. Ibid., p. 10.

74. Ibid., p. 16.

75. Cf. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Note Books*, p. 67.

76. Carocci, G., *Storia d'Italia dall'Unitá ad oggi*, Milano, 1981, p. 100.

77. Giorgio Candeloro, *Storia d'Italia contemporanea: Lo sviluppo del capitalismo e del movimento operaio, 1871—1896*, 6th ed., vol. 6, Roma, 1979, p. 339.

78. Ibid., p. 473; Franco Bandini, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale: Storia delle guerre*

coloniali, 1882—1943, p. 95; Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, 1976, pp. 611—12.

79. Candeloro, *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 6, pp. 310—11.

80. Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Note Books*, p. 67.

81. Alfredo Capone, *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 20, Roma, 1981, p. 423.

82. Francesco Brancato, *Storia del parlamento italiano*, vol. 10, Roma, 1973, p. 173.

83. Aldo Mola, *L'imperialismo italiano: la politica estera dall'Unitá al fascismo*, Roma, 1980; Georgio Rochat, *Il colonialismo italiano*, Torino, 1975; Naitza, G. B., *Il colonialismo nella storia d'Italia, 1882—1949*, Firenze, 1975.

84. Candeloro, p. 468. 'Every expansion in Africa', wrote Crispi to Baratieri in 1895, 'finds opposition in north Italy'.

85. Ibid., p. 436.

86. Ibid., p. 438.

87. Since the literature on the motives for the scramble for Africa is too extensive to be fitted into a footnote, I shall only barely outline the various explanations.

The most dominant theory approached the 'scramble' as primarily an outcome of European diplomatic rivalry where Africa and its resources were of little concern and relevance. See A. J. P. Taylor, *Germany's Bid for Colonies, 1884—1885*, London, 1938; P. Gifford and Wm. R. Louis, eds., *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven, 1967; Idem., *Britain and France in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven, 1971.

An equally important interpretation but from an entirely different angle has been that provided by R. Robinson and G. Gallagher in their major study, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, London, 1961. The authors argued that if it were not for conditions prevailing in Africa, there would have been no scramble. Explaining the British occupation of Egypt and hence the beginning of the scramble, the authors maintained that Britain was compelled to act because the nationalist movement in Egypt threatened the continued operation of the Suez Canal. The Robinson-Gallagher thesis continues to exercise considerable influence. See R. Oliver and J. D. Fage, *Short History of Africa*, London, 1962.

With the publication of A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, London, 1973, the scramble began to be explained as one of the consequences of the Great Depression (1873—96). The Great Depression had, according to Hopkins, created serious strains between European merchants and their African counterparts. European merchants called for the involvement of their states in order to abolish taxes levied by Africans and for the advancement of trading frontiers necessary for the creation of a larger market for their goods. Partition began in earnest with the wave of protectionist policies of France and Germany in the early 1880's.

Hopkins' economic basis of colonialism was not a re-statement of marxist theories of imperialism. European states were not drawn to Africa because they were desperately looking for places to invest their surplus but mainly to protect existing and future trade with Africa.

The influence of Hopkins' study remains considerable, though not unchallenged. J. F. Munro's, *Africa and the International Economy, 1800—1860*, London, 1976, is extensively based on Hopkins. H. S. Wilson, *The Imperial Experience in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Minneapolis, 1977, also deals with the scramble along Hopkins' line. The motives for German imperialism as a consequence of the Great Depression are also dealt with by W. D. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1978. More recently, J.P. Cain in his *Economic Foundations of British Overseas Expansion*, London, 1980, based his African section on Hopkins. Finally, the Hopkins interpretation was fully endorsed by G. N. Uzoigwe, 'European Partition and Conquest of Africa: An Overview', in *The UNESCO General History of Africa, vol. 7: Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880—1935*, edited by A. Adu Boahen, Heinemann, London, 1985.

An attempt at a comprehensive general theory of partition was that of G.N. Sanderson, 'The European Partition of Africa: Coincidence or Conjecture?', *European Imperialism and the Partition of Africa*, edited by E.F. Penrose, London, 1975, and revised and expanded for *The Cambridge History of Africa, vol. 6, from 1870 to 1905*, edited by R. Oliver and G. N. Sanderson, Cambridge, 1985. Although Sanderson appears to have challenged the dangers of elevating conclusions derived from case studies to the status of general explanations (e. g. Hopkins), his interpretation of the partition in terms of the collapse of the pre-1883 European stability has more similarities to the diplomatic rivalry version put forward in the 1920's and 1930's.

88. A notable exception is the study by Carlo Giglio, *Etiopia/Mar Rosso*, Roma, 1958.

89. Alberto Acquarone, 'Ferdinando Martini e l'amministrazione della colonia Eritrea', *Clio*, 12:4 (1977) 341—427; Idem., 'La politica coloniale italiana dopo Adua: Ferdinando Martini governatore in Eritrea', *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, 42:3 (1975) 346—77, 42:4 (1977) 449—83.

90. Lorreta Caponi, 'Questione agraria e questione nazionale in Eritrea, Etiopia e in Somalia', *L'Altra Africa*, 1:1 (1974) p. 45.

91. Ibid., p. 50.

92. Ibid..

93. Irma Taddia, 'Le trasformazioni della proprietá terreira nell'altopiano eritreo in periodo coloniale, 1890—1940 in *Africa come storia*, A. M. Gentili, et. al, Milano, 1980, pp. 275—91; Idem., 'Sulla politica della terra nella colonia Eritrea, 1890—1950, *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 14:1 (1984) 43—77; Idem., 'Intervento pubblico e capitale privato nella colonia Eritrea', *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 14:2 (1985) 207—42.

94. Idem., *L'Eritrea — Colonia, 1890—1952*, Milano, 1986.

95. See my review, 'Italian Colonialism and the Transformation of Social and Economic Structures', *Notes on Nationalism and Resistance in Eritrea, 1890—1940*, pp. 88—90.

96. Ibid., p. 89.

97. Romain Rainero, *I primi tentativi di colonizzazione agricola e di popolamento nella colonia Eritrea, 1890—1895*, Milano, 1960.

98. R. De Marco, *The Italianization of African Natives: Italian Colonial Educational Policy*, New York, 1943.

99. The papers and Memoire of Blatta Gebre Egziabeher Gila Mariam (c. 1860—1914), the historical novel of Father Gebre Yesus Haile written in 1929 but published in 1950 and the small booklet by Bishop Yacob Gebre Yesus on Ancient Customs of the Ethiopian people composed between 1932 and 1936 and published in 1968 are the only written sources by the colonized.

100. I refer primarily to the papers of General Rodolfo Graziani, governor of Italian East African Empire, May 1936 to December 1937, and the file of the Ministry of Italian Africa (Ministry of Colonies) which was handed over to the Central Archive by the Allies soon after the end of Second World War. This file is designated as ACS-MAI. The sources in the Archivio Centrale di Stato (ACS) deal mainly with political problems related to the pacification of Ethiopia and hence contain very limited material on Eritrea.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COLONIALISM

Introduction

This chapter attempts to answer two principal questions. Firstly, what functions were expected from Eritrea and how did the colony fulfill them? Secondly, did the importance of the colony (to colonialism) lie in its economic function or in other non-economic factors such as strategic and political considerations? In the context of the state of research these questions are posed here for the first time, although some aspects of colonial economic policies for the 1890—95 period have been studied, notably by Rainero and Pankhurst.[1]

This chapter is organized around the four distinct economic and non-economic functions expected of Eritrea. These were: 1) the policy of using Eritrea as a colony of settlement for poor and landless Italian peasants (1890—95); 2) as a source of raw material products for Italy and as a depot for the transit trade in Ethiopian and Arabian products; 3) as a reservoir of recruits for the colonial army in the Italian expansion to Somalia (1908— 10), Libya (1912—32) and finally Ethiopia (1935—41); and 4) as a colony of Italian industrial and commercial settlement, 1935—41. This is followed by a concluding discussion on the relative importance of the colony's economic and strategic condsiderations.

Three kinds of source materials have been used. By far the most important are the deliberations of the Italian Parliament and reports submmitted to it. These are designated as *Atti Parlamentari* (Parliamentary Acts). Of these, of considerable value are the reports by Leopoldo Franchetti, the parliamentary Deputy for settlement of colonist project (1893—94), the reports of the first civilian governor of Eritrea, Ferdinando Martini (1901—02); (1902—07) and finally, the report of the Minister of Colonies in 1918. The *Atti Parlamentari* also contain annual approvals of the budget of Eritrea.[2]

The *Leggi e Decreti del Regno D'Italia* (Laws and Decrees of the Kingdom of Italy) published annually have been very useful for the amount and distribution of tribute to be collected from the inhabitants of Eritrea. For the local colonial laws, which were only published in Eritrea, I have relied for the

1890—1914 period on the compilation by Professor Angelo Mori (1916). For the post 1914 period I have resorted to the publications of the *Bollettino Ufficiale della Colonia Eritrea* (the Official Colonial Bulletin). The *Statistica del movimento del commercio della colonia Eritrea* (Statistics of the Commercial Movement of the Colony of Eritrea), published annually, has been the main source for the figures of the import/export trade from 1912 until 1934.[3]

The second kind of source material is either officially sponsored or privately conducted studies. In this category, the most important are: the report commissioned by governor F. Martini and carried out by Bartolommei-Gioli (1903); the study of the general economic and political situation by Renato Paoli (1908); the study commissioned by governor Salvago-Raggi and carried out by Omodeo Peglion (1913); Alberto Pollera's description of the commercial life in Eritrea (1926); and finally, the substantial monographs on the Eritrean economy and its economic history by Angelo Piccioli (1933) and by Santagata (1935).[4]

The archival sources constitute the third kind of source material and have been used to assess mainly Eritrea's role as a recruitment area for the colonial army. Although collected from the Archivio Eritrea AE, ASMAI, and ACS they are, on the whole fragmentary.[5]

Eritrea as a Colony of Settlement

Described as *la colonia primogenita* (first born colony), it was widely believed that Eritrea would attract a considerable number of Italian migrants. Those who supported colonial expansion, sharing the views of Prime Minister Crispi, differed among themselves over the methods of implementation and the role of the state.[6] The policy of settlement, which lasted about five years, was the creation of Crispi and Leopoldo Franchetti, an outstanding expert on Italian rural problems. Whereas Crispi foresaw colonial policy in general terms, Franchetti from the beginning had an elaborate plan. For Franchetti, Crispi's African policy primarily meant a partial solution to the Italian rural problem.[7]

The Royal Decree of January 1, 1890, which established the juridical existence of Eritrea as a single political entity, also created an autonomous office for *colonizzazione* (colonist settlement). This office was occupied by Leopoldo Franchetti from its inception June 1890 until the first months of 1895. Franchetti argued that colonist settlement should be limited to landless peasants only and that the state should provide generous loan for their settlement in the new colony.[8] His strong opposition to the granting of conces-

sions to capitalist firms lay in a well founded fear that such concessions would create a *Latifundism* similar to those prevailing in southern Italy. Franchetti stood for a government planned and subsidized settlement of landless peasants. Franchetti's puritanical approach was opposed by Crispi, as well as by the members of the parliamentary commission of enquiry which visited Eritrea in 1891, and by the succesive military governors of Eritrea.

For prime minister Crispi, the idea of excluding capitalists from acquiring concessions in Eritrea amounted to a noble piece of poetry which would not produce any useful result.[9] Others, notably the members of the Royal Commission of Enquiry of 1891, agreed with Franchetti and other experts, about the availability of vast colonizable lands, but they strongly differed about the role of capitalists in the new colony.[10] The Commission of Enquiry, which visited Eritrea in 1891, advised the adoption of a *colonizzazione libera*, in other words a settlement policy regulated by supply and demand.[11] Opposition from the governors of Eritrea, particularly that of Oreste Baratieri (1892—96), was more concerned with the division of power between the autonomous office of colonist settlement and the colonial administration. Franchetti depended on the colonial state to implement his programme, for example to keep Eritreans off expropriated lands. However he was not responsible to the colonial government as he derived his authority and budget from the Italian Parliament.[12]

These differences notwithstanding, Franchetti was sufficiently encouraged by Crispi and the Italian Parliament to proceed with his programme. On the bases of a series of results from several agricultural experimental stations in Eritrea, Franchetti instructed Governor Baratieri to extensively expropriate land deemed suitable for colonist settlement. Between January 1893 and the beginning of 1895 over 400,000 hectares of land were expropriated and declared available for Italian colonists.

Colonist settlement began in earnest with the arrival of the first group of Italian peasants to southwestern Eritrea.[13] In his annual report to Parliament for 1893—94, Franchetti emphasized the need for an effective method of preventing the repossession of expropriated land by the 'indigenous', who after the end of the great famine (1888—92) were quickly resuming intensive cultivation. It was indispensable, Franchetti argued, that the land set aside for Italian colonists should not be available to the indigenous population, and he urged the colonial administration to ensure that the 400,000 hectares were left fallow until the Italian colonists were ready to make use of them.[14]

Seen from the perspective of the office of settlement, Franchetti's approach though a hard policy was indeed far sighted. The problem he wanted to avoid was a conflict between the colonial state and Eritrean peasants which could be caused by an infirm and vacillating colonial policy. Franchetti quite clearly perceived that it was easier to delimit and fence off expropriated areas when

the colony was thinly populated due to famines and epidemics. He warned that If the 'indigenous' cultivators were not effectively impeded from cultivating the areas set aside for Italian colonists, it would be virtually impossible to carry out his programme. Otherwise he continued, the Italian presence in the colony would remain only a military occupation, at great expense to the nation and the national budget.[15] Franchetti went further and argued that a failure to keep expropriated areas free from the 'indigenous', and a failure to occupy these hectares by colonist settlement, would in the near future result in an awareness among the 'indigenous' of the presence of a dominating race.[16]

Both in Italy and Eritrea Franchetti's arguments were not only misunderstood, they were also deliberately ignored. It was thought in Rome that Franchetti's colonization would demand a considerable financial commitment.[17] In Eritrea, the military governor's main concern was the maintenance of law and order. The persistent requests by the Office of Settlement for logistical support complicated the governor's task of strengthening the colonial state. Instead the military governors supported a policy of voluntary settlement (*colonizzazione libera*).[18]

By the end of 1894 the conflict between Franchetti's Office of Settlement and the colonial administration had become irreparable. This confusion had started when Baratieri instituted his own settlement programme, which encouraged only those peasants deemed to have sufficient capital.[19] Baratieri's main argument was tactical. He wanted to avoid hostility to Italian colonists which he thought could be caused by indiscriminate expropriation and the resultant adverse impact on the population. As a military governor his first priority was maintenance of law and order. Already undermined in Eritrea and isolated in Rome, the coup de grace that destroyed Franchetti and his policy was the Bahta Hagos uprising in December 1894 and the subsequent state of war between Italy and Ethiopia.[20] On February 20, 1895, Franchetti submitted his resignation and a few months later his Office of Settlement was abolished by Baratieri.[21] Baratieri then stipulated that land was only available to those who possessed capital between 2,500 and 3,000 lire, an amount estimated to cover all settlement expenses until the first harvest. Franchetti's experiment with proletarian settlement was put aside. In the aftermath of Adwa not only the policy of settlement but the fate of the colony hung in the balance.[22]

The economic policy of converting Eritrea into a settlement colony, for Italian peasants, was revoked in 1895 and never revived. Subsequent legislation 1903, 1909 and 1926 pushed it further into the distant past.[23] Although colonial economic policy during the 1890—95 period has been widely commented upon, there have been few attempts to explain its failure. In a pioneer study, Professor Romain Rainero, after noting that personality clashes had

compromised the experiment, posed the question as to who was to blame for the failure of the settlement scheme: the Franchetti system, Baratieri's policies, the Italo-Ethiopian war, or 'the fatalistic component of colonial policies'.[24]

Rainero did not explain the failure of the policy because he believed that the reasons were too numerous and complex. Doctor Richard Pankhurst on the other hand, while maintaining that the Bahta uprising was a striking manifestation of the Eritrean peasantry's discontent against Italian land confiscation, argued that the failure of the policy of settlement were due to the practical difficulties of colonization.[25] These difficulties included the inefficiency of officials as well as the lack of interest in Rome.

The authors of the *L'Italia in Africa* series, after explaining that Franchetti's policy was inspired by a genuine desire to settle colonists, argued that the unfortunate events of Adwa put a definitive end to the experiment.[26] Most post-Second World War Italian authors have viewed the policy of colonist settlement as of little significance for Italian colonial history.[27] The poverty of natural resources e.g. terrain and rainfall, are frequently mentioned as the main reasons for the failure of Franchetti's policy.

As the policy of colonist settlement completely failed and as the colonial state admitted this failure through the *de jure* recognition of the land rights of Eritrean peasants, Italian writers could quite rightly consider it as of minor importance. However the reasons for its failure were neither the adverse climatic conditions nor the series of practical difficulties mentioned by Dr. Pankhurst. Eritrea had, at the beginning of the century, considerable land for Italian colonists and this is attested by agricultural experts of the time.[28] With the re-establishment of colonial power by virtue of the treaties of 1900 and 1902, there were no decisive factors to hinder the revamping of Franchetti's settlement policy. Eritrean resistance was a factor to be considered but it was hardly decisive.[29]

It is my contention that the policy of colonist settlement failed because it was never a serious driving force in Italian colonial expansion. Moreover it appears that the policy of colonist settlement was based on two fallacious assumptions. Firstly, that the Italian state would not be asked to finance the settlement of landless peasants or commit itself to expenditure on infrastructures. Prime Minister Crispi ordered the armed forces to conduct limited operations, but he knew too well that he was limited by his precarious dependence on a belligerent parliament and the Treasury for colonial funds.[30]

The second assumption was based on the hope that the colonized subjects would not, through resistance and acts of insubordination, aggravate colonial expenditure. The cost of maintaining law and order and the considerable financial commitment necessary to carry out the settlement of landless Italian

peasants were not envisaged by the colonial power. Italy was far too weak financially to subsidize colonist settlement.[31] It is difficult not to concur with Gramsci's analysis that the policy of settling landless peasants as a motive for colonial expansion was a myth. This myth was cultivated by the ruling class in order to divert the attention of the southern Italian peasant from agitating about the problems at home to the offer of free land in the colonies.[32]

Eritrea as a Source of Raw Material

The Italo-Ethiopian treaty of May 1900 cleared away the political uncertainty of Italian colonial rule in Eritrea.[33] By virtue of this boundary treaty, the Ethiopian state sanctioned the Italian occupation of Eritrea. The treaty was an important landmark in Italian colonial history, and particularly so for the history of Eritrea. The 1869—99 period, in contrast to the later 1900—35 era, was one of disjointed experiences which are best treated as a background to the later colonial period which — to all intents and purposes begins with the treaty of 1900. From the Italian perspective, the treaty to some extent mitigated the disastrous impact of Adwa since Italy still remained in Eritrea. More importantly, Italian colonialism in its most pragmatic form, traces its evolution to this treaty sympathetically described in the 1910's as *la politica dell'imperialismo sano* (rational imperialism).[34]

It was not a coincidence that in 1901 the newly appointed and first civilian governor Ferdinando Martini commissioned Bartolommei-Gioli to undertake a fresh look into the future of the newly re-constituted colony. Bartolommei-Gioli's report, *La colonizzazione dell'Eritrea* was submitted in 1903 and it was to remain the main guide for colonial economic policy. Unlike Franchetti, Bartolommei-Gioli showed keen awareness of the anti-colonial mood in Italy, the weakness of Italian capital, and the complex nature of the Eritrean land tenure systems.

After noting that suitable areas existed for European settlement, Bartolommei-Gioli advised that the only way to secure land from the 'indigenous' who were fanatically attached to it, was through the development of the market economy whereby they could be enticed away from their land by the offer of wage labour.[35] He rejected state subsidized colonist settlement as too burdensome on the national and colonial budget. He also rejected confiscation and expropriation because of its political repercussions in Eritrea as well as in Ethiopia.[36]

Relegating the policy of settlement into the distant future, Bartolommei-Gioli proceeded to elaborate the second function of the colony, namely that

of exploitation.[37] Eritrea, Bartolommei-Gioli argued, possessed many raw material resources needed by the mother country. These resources he felt, should be developed for export by utilizing Italian capital and indigenous labour.

The report also noted Eritrea's strategic location, and it drew the conclusion that Sudan and Ethiopia appeared destined to function as the hinterland of the Italian colony. Furthermore, Eritrea could be developed as a focal point for the transit trade to Ethiopia and Sudan.

Bartolommei-Gioli's description of Eritrea as primarily a colony of exploitation shares many similarities with S. Amin's description of colonies where the prime concern of the colonial state lay in creating a dominant trade monopoly and the concomitant restructuring of the economy for export.[38]

From the limited and sketchy sources on the pre-colonial import/export trade of northern Ethiopia, we can note that trade was transacted by barter, where imports matched exports. The Austrian Maria Theresa thaler since its first issue (1780) was widely used though the economy was far from monetized. The thaler was used to purchase imported goods, to pay tribute to the central state, and for ornaments. In 1879, a few years before the Italian occupation of Massawa, goods imported to Ethiopia (including Eritrea) were estimated at 2 million lire as opposed to two and half million in exports.[39] By the end of the first year of the Italian presence in Massawa, imports spiralled up to nearly 10 million lire while exports remained constant.[40] Of the total value of the 10 million lire imports, a little over half a million lire worth of goods originated in Italy. In the first few years Italian colonization created a boom for other countries, namely India, Austria and Southern Arabia, who were able to increase their trade with Eritrea more than fivefold.

The colonial economic policy of restructuring the new colony's import/export in Italy's favour was first introduced in 1886 when an ad valorem tax from 8 to 15 per cent was imposed on non-Italian imports.[41]. This political intervention exclusively designed to reserve the Eritrean economy for Italian industry, achieved the desired objective of placing Italy in a dominant position vis-à-vis the import/export trade of the colony. Table 2.1 and 2.2 explain the transition.

From 1910 onwards, about 50 per cent of Eritrean exports went to Italy and more than 50 per cent of Eritrean imports came from Italy. While imports were restructured through the ad valorem tax system, the restructuring of the export trade was achieved through the extension of Italian capital to the colony. Easily exploitable commodities such as palma dum were contracted out to concession companies who had preferential rights of export to Italy. Italian colonist farmers, whose active possession and cultivation in the highlands never exceeded 4,700 hectares were encouraged to stay in business by a special regulation that allowed them to export duty free to Italy.[42]

Table 2.1. Italian Participation in the import trade of Eritrea

Year	Total imports in units of a thousand lire	Imports from Italy	Percentage Italian share
1900	9,376	275	2.9
1905	12,909	3,648	28.2
1910	20,230	6,211	30.7
1915	29,469	14,117	47.9
1920	95,185	35,764	37.5
1925	203,453	133,083	65.4
1930	176,814	89,731	50.7
1934	215,686	125,219	58.0

Table 2.2. Italian Participation in the export trade of Eritrea, 1897—1933

Year	Total exports in units of a thousand lire	Exports to Italy in units of a thousand lire	Percentage Italian share
1900	2,745	360	13.1
1905	6,772	843	12.4
1910	11,135	1,878	27.7
1915	19,850	10,078	50.8
1920	67,263	26,777	39.8
1925	119,462	81,061	67.8
1930	76,219	42,687	56.0
1934	73,092	53,190	72.7

Source: *Statistica del movimento del commercio della colonia Eritrea, 1900—1934.*

The structure of the colonial economy as perceived by Bartolommei-Gioli had two main components. The first component was the development and exploitation of resources and natural produce of the colony, which consisted of livestock, various kinds of pearls, oil seeds, gum arabic, palma dum and a potential for growing cotton and coffee. With the exception of coffee and cotton, the rest were traditional export products of Eritrea. The second component was the development of Eritrea as an entrepôt for transit trade and as a staging post for the economic and political penetration of Ethiopia, Sudan and Arabia.

While the first component was purely economic, and depended upon the mechanism of supply and demand, the second component was dependent upon political and diplomatic factors in order to maintain cordial relations between Eritrea and northern Ethiopia [43]. The policy of using Eritrea as a staging post for the Italian economic penetration of northern Ethiopia shaped the relationship between the colonial state and its Eritrean subjects. In order to

exercise political and economic influence in Ethiopia the colonial government was felt compelled to treat the Eritreans in a manner acceptable to the Ethiopians along the border.[44] Forced or corvee labour was in practice ruled out and the confiscation/expropriation of land was discontinued, although not in theory. The structure of the economy appeared to hang uneasily on the exploitation of natural resources, while due care was given to the political relationships between the colonial state, its Eritrean subjects and the Ethiopian state.

From the modest scale of the colony's exports inherited by the Italians, the growth of the import/export trade as expressed in annual statistical reports appears rather striking. In 1900, Eritrea exported 2,8 million lire worth of products, while by 1933 exports had climbed to 62 million lire. From a little over nine million lire in 1900, imports jumped to the level of 177 million lire.

As graph 2.1 below illustrates, exports as well as imports were subject to sharp fluctuations, caused by changes in the world market prices and natural catastrophes such as drought and locusts at home.

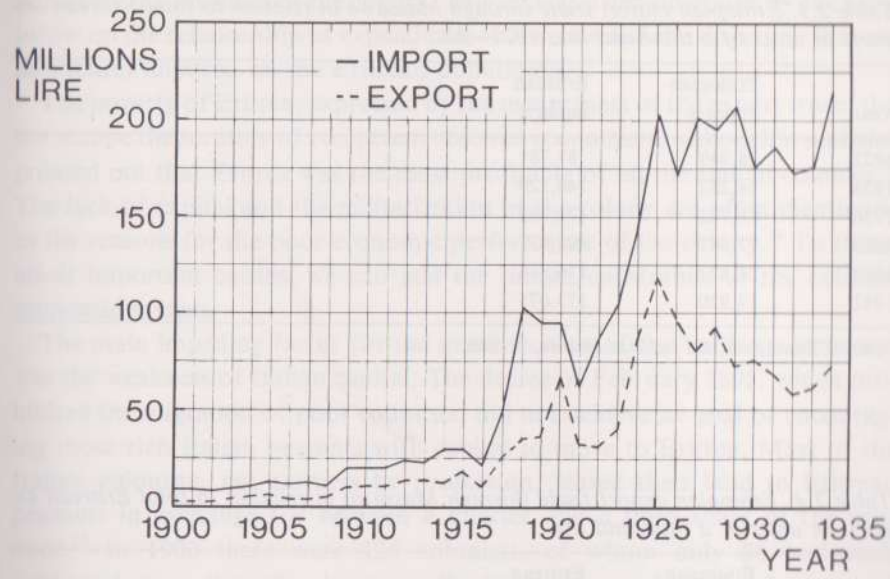
The sharp increase in exports from 1924 onwards, when compared with the 1915—24 period, was largely based on coffee imports from Arabia, which were immediately exported to Italy. The increase was also due to Eritrea's position as an outlet for the Ethiopian import/export trade. Coffee exports, which never exceeded one million lire per annum until 1922, jumped to 26 million in 1924 and reached a peak of 33 million in 1928.[45]

In most years between 1924 and 1933 the import/export figure contained an average of 50 million lire which had virtually nothing to do with the Eritrean economy. Moreover, the aggregate import export figure does not in any way take into consideration the inflation of the lire.[46]

The aggregate import/export figures also include products destined for northern Ethiopia as well as those export products e.g. hides, coffee, butter etc. which originated there. The commercial and economic penetration of Ethiopia from the late 1910's had become an important component on which the edifice of the colonial economy was built.[47] Massawa had been the most important Ethiopian outlet to the sea for centuries and the Italians strived to improve and develop it as an entrepôt for the commercial and economic penetration of Ethiopia.

For economic purposes, northern Ethiopia was considered an extension of Eritrea. There were political boundaries but no economic or fiscal borders. No distinction was made at the customs office in Massawa between products destined for Eritrea or Ethiopia. All imported goods from countries other than Italy were subject to the same ad valorem tax system. By this mechanism Italian products increased their competitiveness among Ethiopian consumers.

By the 1930's, trade between Eritrea and northern Ethiopia (the import/export of Ethiopia through Massawa) had considerably expanded. By this



Graph 2.1. Aggregate Import and Export of Eritrea, 1900—34 (in Units of a Million Lire).

period, according to Santagata's estimate, up to 25 per cent of all Ethiopian export/import trade may have passed through Massawa.[48] This meant that the aggregate Eritrean import/export figure included up to 25 per cent of the Ethiopian import/export trade. Ethiopian exports to Eritrea included items for local consumption as well as those for export, and thus it is difficult to distinguish the value of each item. Nevertheless, Santagata's estimation appears to be fairly accurate since it is corroborated by other sources after the end of Italian colonial rule.[49]

The extent of the Ethiopian transit trade and its share in the total Eritrean import/export trade is illustrated in the table below.

If it were not for the strategic location of Eritrea, firstly as an outlet for Ethiopian trade, and secondly as a transit juncture for Arabian products (namely coffee), the productivity of the colony in terms of exports would most certainly have remained in the range of 15 to 20 million lire per annum.[50] This was a result of the colonial economic policy (also described as the milking economy)[51] pursued from 1901 until the eve of the Italo-Ethiopian war. But the Eritrean cow did not appear to have been very productive. Eritrean exports to Italy as well as its imports from the latter comprised less than 1 per cent of Italian trade volume with the outside world.[52] Neither investment in infrastructure (e.g. railroads, telegraph and telephone network) nor the elaborate and overmanned colonial bureaucracy could be justified or sup-

Table 2.3. Ethiopian import trade through Massawa in relation to total Eritrean imports in units of a thousand lire, 1922—32.

Year	Ethiopian imports	Eritrean imports
1922	28,949	87,781
1924	54,252	146,129
1926	64,782	171,789
1928	77,547	195,627
1930	24,827	176,814
1932	17,920	173,075

Source: Santagata, *La colonia Eritrea*, p. 166.

Table 2.4. Ethiopian export trade through Massawa in relation to total Eritrean exports in units of a thousand lire.

year	Ethiopian exports	Eritrean exports
1922	24,390	31,623
1924	34,942	87,901
1926	37,911	97,854
1928	50,300	93,712
1930	18,423	76,219
1932	14,512	59,194

Source: Santagata, *La colonia Eritrea*, p. 167. Figures for the earlier period appear to be less reliable. Cf. Checchi, *Movimento*, p. 8, for figures from 1897 to 1910. It needs to be pointed out that some of the Ethiopian exports were for local consumption in Eritrea.

Table 2.5. Tribute, revenue and total expenditure, 1900—34 (in units of a thousand lire).

year	tribute	total revenue	total expenditure
1901—02	524	2,591	12,344
1905—06	599	4,215	12,477
1910—11	811	6,123	15,630
1915—16	923	11,080	17,430
1920—21	1,139	36,839	119,700
1925—26	1,740	30,165	113,562
1929—30	1,986	31,962	90,284

Sources: Compiled from *Raccolta Ufficiale delle leggi e dei decreti*and *Atti Parlamentari*. See Taddia, *'Intervento pubblico'*, pp. 216—21 for figures covering most of the period.

ported by the revenues of the colony. This is clearly demonstrated by the table below on the relationship of expenditure to revenue and the direct tax (known as tribute) imposed on the Eritrean population.

The poverty of Eritrea, expressed by the meagreness of the export trade, did not escape the scrutiny of competent colonial economists, although it was also pointed out that Eritrea was the most profitable of all the Italian colonies.[53] The lack of capital and the militarization of the colony are often mentioned as the reasons for the poor economic performance of the colony.[54] To these, albeit important causes, we can add the inbuilt constraints of the colonial economic system.

The main impeding factor for the maximization of the 'milking economy' was the weakness of Italian capital. The decree of February 1895, which prohibited the migration of poor colonists, did not achieve its goal of encouraging those rich Italian peasants with capital to move to Eritrea. Most of the Italian colonists, not farmers by profession, leased their land to Eritrean peasants in exchange for between a quarter and a third share of the produce.[55] In 1902 there were 126 colonists, of whom only 36 had each cultivated more than five hectares. By 1913, the number of colonists had decreased by a half.[56] Between 1913 and 1932, the colonist population slowly increased from 61 colonists to 161.[57]

In 1938, 22,335 hectares were distributed among the 150 colonists, 6,350 hectares of which were located in the highlands.[58] Out of these 22,395 hectares 4,473 hectares were bought as private property whereas the rest were concessionary lands.[59] Though the total land available to colonists constituted less than one per cent of the exploitable land, Italian colonists did not fully use their private possessions or concessions. In the lowlands, the colonial administration set aside 3,000 hectares for cotton cultivation out of which only 1,600 hectares was effectively cultivated.[60] Likewise on the eastern slopes (*pendici orientale*) 5,000 hectares were reserved in 1931 in anticipation of the expected coffee production. However by 1947 there were little more than half a dozen Italian colonists with effective concessions of up to 50 hectares each.[61]

The bulk of Italian capital was invested in the import/export trade rather than in production. The risk factor was relatively negligible as Italian products, protected by the ad valorem tax, were in a favourable position to compete with other foreign products. Far less capital was invested in the exploitation of raw material resources although one of the raisons d'être of the colonial economy remained the supply of raw materials to the mother country.

The colonial state never failed to encourage and assist Italian capital. The elaborate 354 km long rail network was financed by the colonial government rather than by a consortium of investors as was the case in many British colonies. The colonial state developed the Tessenei dam, which was capable of

irrigating up to 20,000 hectares but it was never exploited by Italian industrial capital. Italian capital had another important advantage in that the colony was closed to outside capital other than Italian. Instead of encouraging the inflow of capital, this protectionist aspect of the colonial economy produced a contrary effect by making the colony less competitive.[62]

Italian capital, when invested, demanded concessionary rights which would ensure a profitable return. The concessionary demands of Italian capital turned much of the colony into an 'economy of concession companies'.[63] Through their monopoly power the concessionaries hindered the rational exploitation of raw material resources, thus strengthening the inelastic nature of the economy. On the eve of the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935—36, the investment of Italian capital into the colony can be summarized under the following areas.

There were two firms producing salt for export, the oldest of which was established in 1905. Investment in the fishing resources of the colony began in 1919 but closed down in 1933 due to fall of world prices. A second small fishing firm was established in 1930. Sea shells have since 1928 been converted into buttons by a small factory at Massawa.

The second area of investment was related to the soil. By early 1930's, there was one azienda engaged since 1907 in the cultivation and production of sisal fiber. In addition, there were three other concession companies engaged mainly in the collection of palma dum (a kind of nut used for manufacturing of buttons), essences and gum arabic. Two firms were engaged in the mining industry. The potash company although based in Eritrea carried out its activities in Ethiopia. Gold mining was after 1910 carried out by small entrepreneurs.

Other areas of investment were meat canning (one factory), manufacturing of cigarettes using imported tobacco (five firms), tanning (one firm) and several mills.[64]

Although it is virtually impossible to arrive at a reliable figure for the volume of capital invested in Eritrea, the list of the principal industries cited above provides some indication of capital distribution. As can be seen from the above description most of the capital was invested in the mining and canning industries. Two of the three firms engaged in the production and export of salt survived the crisis of 1929—32 and continued to export to India and Japan. The 1,000 km long Red Sea Coastline attracted only one fishing company until 1930, when a private industrialist established a small firm at the southern end of the Red Sea coast.[65]

If we exclude the firms producing cigarettes, which used imported tobacco, there were only three other processing factories in Eritrea until the 1935 Italo-Ethiopian war. These were the meat canning plant in Asmara and the button manufacturing plants at Keren and Massawa. The meat canning plant was

established in 1913 to supply the 6,000 strong Eritrean and Ethiopian colonial army stationed in Libya from 1912 until 1932. According to a report compiled by the American Consulate at Aden, the meat factory was Eritrea's most notable and stable industry with considerable potential for growth.[66] The Eritrean archival sources corroborate the American assertion that most of the cattle for slaughter was imported from Ethiopia and not as might have been expected from Eritrea.[67] On the other hand, the button manufacturing plants at Keren and at Massawa were exclusively dependent on local products and, besides satisfying the limited local need, exported semi-manufactured products.

In spite of Santagata's optimistic assertion that of 72 gold producing nations, Eritrea had moved up from bottom place to 42nd position, the gold mining industry remained the least profitable and the most frustrating aspect of the economy. A maximum production of 230 kg achieved in 1938, was undertaken by a parastatal body which had little regard for cost/benefit equation.[68] At a generous rate of 15 lire per gram, 230 kg meant that the total value of gold production reached a little over 3 million lire.[69] With the exception of potash, which was mined in Ethiopia by Italian capital from Eritrea, salt was virtually the only mining industry carried out by colonial capital.[70]

Unfortunately the colonial censuses do not provide data on Eritrean employment patterns. However deducing from the composition of the population and the rural nature of Italian capital, the number of wage earning Eritreans (in the productive sector of the economy) must have ranged between 4,000 and 5,000 [71]. Up to twice this number, as we shall presently discuss below, were employed in the colonial army.

The second constraint on the exploitation of the colony's resources were political factors. This had several dimensions. In Italy, the interest in African colonies for much of the colonial period had been limited to the cost of pacification and administration. After the defeat at Adwa, Italy remained in Eritrea on the condition that the colonial administration kept to a specified minimum budget.[72] This meant that the main task of colonial governors was to maintain an acceptable status quo. The limited budget and lack of support at home were both factors that stopped the colonial administration from introducing expensive measures designed to assist Italian capital. Italy did not forget that the price of radical colonial policies had caused the Bahta uprising.[73] The 1903 report on colonial economic policy had concerned itself with long term plans and had called for a minimum restructuring of Eritrean precapitalist economic structures. The fear that a major economic restructuring would precipitate not only Eritrean but also Ethiopian resistance greatly circumscribed the policy options of the colonial state.[74]

The colonial power, apart from the annual fixed subsidy, left the colony to its own fate. The colonial government did its best to encourage primitive ac-

cumulation, i.e. the transfer of capital from the pre-capitalist to the capitalist sector.[75] This process was implemented within an economic system which tried to maintain the social and economic organization of the peasantry and nomads. The colonial state facilitated, within the constraints imposed on it, the export of Eritrean products to the mother country. It encouraged Italian industrial capital through various tax and duty exemptions.

More decisive however, were the extensive rail and road networks that the colony financed and managed. Begun in 1887, the Massawa-Asmara railroad was completed in 1911 at a cost of 19 million lire. The Asmara-Keren network (104 km), started in 1910 and completed in 1922, at a cost up to 25 million lire. The Keren-Agordat railway (84 km) was constructed at a cost of another 21 million lire.[76] Between 1900 and 1930, the colonial state had invested up to 100 million lire in the development and maintenance of communication infrastructures. Nonetheless, the colonial state and its critics were aware that the resources of the colony, e.g. livestock and land for colonists, were not still fully exploited. With a modest exercise of the coercive apparatus (e.g. forced labour, forced sale of livestock, excessive money taxation), the colonial state might have aided the process of capital accumulation. It, however, refrained from taking such measures for two main reasons. Firstly, for fear of the political repercussions that might ensue and secondly, as we shall argue below, because of the function of Eritrea as a reservoir of manpower for the colonial army.

The imposition of the capitalist system over Eritrean pre-capitalist social formations was facilitated by the colonial state. The dominant mode of production in Eritrea, without distinguishing the various social formations appears to have been a variant of what Coquery-Vidrovitch has described as the African mode.[77] This system is defined as a combination of a patriarchal communal economy with exclusive control by one group of tribute and long distance trade.

The various state systems (the Tigrinyan and the aristocratic) were indeed despotic; however their despotism was solely aimed at the collection and exploitation of the surplus. Provided the villages paid their tribute, there was little interference in how they ran their collective life.[78] The long distance trade in the Eritrean highlands carried out by a distinct trading community called the Jeberti, was under the exclusive control of the ruling elite. Among pastoral aristocratic communities, the ruling elite controlled long distance trade by their economic power and the tribute/service mechanism. It has to be emphasized however, that long distance trade hardly constituted the dominant feature of the Eritrean social formations.[79] In these social formations with the exception of land ownership, the means of production were owned privately. Hence, while the egalitarian land holding system and the virtual absence of commodity exchange explain the pre-capitalist aspect of the social

formation, private ownership of the means of production equally explain their receptiveness to the capitalist mode.[80]

The capitalist mode was superimposed on Eritrean societies for the purpose of primitive accumulation. It is this process of development and the stage of primitive accumulation that distinguishes the colonial economic system from the capitalist system, indigenously developed in Europe. This can best be explained through an examination of the relations of production that had evolved and matured during the first three decades of this century.

Without restructuring the basis of the indigenous system, colonial capital attempted to integrate the indigenous economic system to that of Italy and then to the world capitalist system.[81] In order to increase primitive accumulation Eritrean workers were offered precarious jobs and invariably low wages, thus compelling them to rely for survival on the pre-capitalist economic system. Capital was organized and distributed in such a manner that Eritreans were excluded from making full use of it. Resources, be it agricultural or mineral, were given through concessions to Italian citizens. Other means of production, such as land for construction were expropriated or confiscated and then alloted or sold to the citizens of the imperial power. The economic role of Eritreans was to perpetually supply labour for Italian capital.[82] As far as the Eritreans were concerned, the colonial economy was a closed circuit where they could never aspire beyond the stage of selling their labour for wages, which were in turn so low that full proletarianization was virtually impossible.[83]

From the structural analysis of colonialism, we can draw the conclusion that the function of the economy was primarily concerned with the expansion of primitive accumulation. At the local level and throughout the period as I discuss in chapter V below, there was a positive reaction to the colonial economy. The integration of Eritreans into the colonial economy brought material advantages which mitigated the adverse effects of colonial rule.[84] Wages were low and in most cases were never sufficient, but wages were never the only source of income. Most of the available jobs were seasonal and the Eritrean, hardly subjected to forced labour, had considerable choice. The process of proletarianization would have been greater if wages for regularly employed Eritreans had been higher. As the colonial state kept labour costs to a level that would not discourage the inflow of capital, most of the Eritreans employed in the modern sector considered wages as supplementary to their main source of income. The material well-being, measured by the consumption of imported clothing, food, sugar and liquor increased in proportion to that of exports.[85] By providing salaried employment to between 10 and 15 per cent of the population, colonialism increased considerably the autonomy and independence of the colony against natural catastrophes, such

as drought and famine. Salaries as I discuss in Chapter six were during periods of food shortage spent on food imports rather than in conspicous consumption.[86]

Eritrea as a Source of Colonial Soldiers

Before the first contingent of Eritrean soldiers was dispatched to Somalia (1907), the colonial army had only 5,132 men.[87] Between 1907 and 1910 two Eritrean battalions each of 600 men, were stationed in Somalia.[88]

The first Eritrean battalion of 1,112 men was sent to Libya in the early months of 1912.[89] By July of the same year, 3,728 Eritrean soldiers were stationed in Libya. During this time the entire colonial army was made up of 5,990 men.[90] Recruitment considerably increased and reaching its climax in October 1915, when the colonial army was organized into 15 battalions, of which nine were now in Libya. In October 1915 the army still in Eritrea was composed of 6,106 men which, with an irregular force of 1,244 men under local chiefs meant a total of 7,350 men.[91] In Libya, there were also 4,000 Eritreans and an additional 4,000 men from Ethiopia and the Sudan who had been recruited and trained in Eritrea.[92]

By the middle of 1914 it was clear to the Ministry of Colonies (established in 1912), that Eritrea with its colonial army of slightly over 10,000 men was all that it could provide, if the economy was to function normally.[93] However, since Italy's need for colonial soldiers appeared inexhaustible, the Ministry of Colonies under the leadership of F. Martini, a former governor of Eritrea, suggested the recruitment of northern Ethiopians for the war in Libya.

In so far as Eritreans were concerned, the colonial army had its own hierarchy, with promotion rewarded by higher salaries, privileges and a possible future post in the local colonial bureaucracy.[94] Differences in salaries were based on rank and years of service.[95] Recruitment into the colonial army remained voluntary until the beginning of the 1930's, but once recruited the Eritrean soldier was obliged, if required, to go overseas.[96] Soldiers sent to Libya were paid at double the rate of their normal pay in Eritrea.[97]

Although accessible sources contain a gap for the 1916—24 period, there is no reason to doubt that the prevailing pattern of the 1912—16 period was different. In 1925 (a year when we are able to document the distribution of Eritrean soldiers), we note that they were distributed in the following manner: there were 4,175 men in Eritrea and 4,377 in Libya, making a total of 9,082 men.[98] Three years later the distribution had slightly changed. There were

2,875 in Libya, 3,751 in Eritrea and 880 in Somalia.[99]

The Italian suppression of Libyan resistance finally in 1932 meant that Eritrean soldiers could be dispensed with. However, a new recruitment plan for the invasion of Ethiopia was being formulated. Although the precise moment of the decision to invade Ethiopia still remains controversial, by 1932, a series of studies were made for an eventual war against Ethiopia.[100] In one of these studies, Eritrea was expected to provide an army of 52,600 men.[101] It was further envisaged that the number could be increased to a maximum figure of between 60,000 and 80,000 men.[102] This later figure compiled by the military headquarters in Eritrea was based on the assumption that a population of 600,000 could provide an army of between 60,000 and 80,000 men.

In line with these work plans recruitment began in earnest in early 1934. By mid 1935, according to a reconnaisance study by General Visconti Prasca, only 22,400 Eritreans had been properly trained and were ready for battle action.[103] The General deplored the fact that only a third of the potential manpower had been fully trained. He observed that another 12,000 men had only received one month's training and an equal number, although organized, were without any training at all.[104] Between May and the end of October of 1934, recruitment increased by 11,800, thus bringing the Eritrean colonial army to a total of 60,200 men.[105] The army was divided into two divisions each composed of 14 battalions. On the eve of the Italo-Ethiopian war (October 1935—May 1936) Italy had a colonial army of 100,000 men,[106] 20,000 of whom were from Somalia, 20,000 from Libya and 60,000 from Eritrea.

Sources on the exact numbers of Eritrean soldiers and their deployment in the newly created East African empire are not easily accessible as the relevant files in the Ministry of War are still closed. Even with the detailed papers of General Rodolfo Graziani (governor of the empire May 1936—December 1937), a reconstruction of the size and deployment of Eritrean soldiers is impossible as no distinction was made between Eritrean battalions and the other colonial forces from Somalia and Ethiopia. We know however, that the over 60,000 Eritrean soldiers were from 1935 to 1941 stationed in Ethiopia engaged in the consolidation of the new empire.[107] Reports such as the economic/anthropological study on Eritrea carried out in 1938 confirm the recruitment of up to 70,000 men to the colonial army.[108]

The Eritrean colonial army remained the exemplary model on which other colonial regiments were organized. Colonial troops were used firstly to relieve the Italian army in Ethiopia, and secondly, to strengthen the defence capability of the newly expanded Italian African empire in view of the threat of war in Europe.[109]

The impact of a considerably expanded colonial army on the economy of Eritrea was first noted in a study commissioned by the colonial state and

published in 1913. 'For the Italians', wrote one of the authors, 'Eritrea has become the colony of ascaries' (colonial soldiers).[110] This was a result, the author added, of the implementation of a policy which by respecting the proprietary and land rights of the natives had facilitated the recruitment of Eritrean soldiers to Somalia and Libya.[111] Although highly appreciative of the policy of the then incumbent governor Salvago-Raggi, the author noted that recruitment to the army had taken away a couple of thousand of workers from the labour market, 'a sufficient cause of a certain really felt shortage of labour in the colony'.[112] At the time of writing, the author was convinced that recruitment of Eritreans to Libya was of a temporary nature. However since the Libyan demand for Eritrean soldiers was constant up to 1935, the shortage of labour and its adverse impact on the economy was felt throughout the period.

Until the end of 1907, a standing colonial army of 5,000 men was justified for the purpose of defending Eritrea from an Ethiopian invasion. There were indeed sufficient indications that the Ethiopian state might revoke the boundary treaties and launch an attack with the aim of repossessing the Eritrean highlands up to Massawa.[113] Although the colonial government and Italy were concerned, they judged the Ethiopian threat as unrealistic, and thus they knowingly weakened the defence of the colony by dispatching Eritrean soldiers to Somalia.

The damaging impact of recruitment was however clearly expressed by the governor of the colony. In August 1914, the Minister of Colonies instructed the governor of Eritrea to send three more battalions to Libya altogether around 2,000 men.[114] By then the Eritrean colonial army had 9,000 men. Replying to the Italian request, Governor Salvago-Raggi pointed out how the colony was first drawn into the Libyan war. He wrote:

> The colony agreed willingly to contribute one battalion, but when it was asked to increase its contribution to four battalions and when its soldiers were made to stay longer than six months at a time, I have to point out how damaging the consequences were going to be for the colony and that it was inopportune to destroy a colony in order to conquer another.[115]

Continuing the impact of the dispatch of Eritreans to Libya, the governor explained that Eritrea found itself in a serious economic crisis arising from the shortage of labour. 'Labour', he wrote, 'was earlier recruited from the peasantry but these people are nowhere to be found'.[116] As a result of the shortage of labour, wages for manual labour had gone up by between 60 and 90% and even then it was difficult to satisfy the demand.[117] Cataloguing the immediate consequences, the governor notified his superiors that many firms had either asked for damages, revoked their contracts, or gone bankrupt mainly due to the problems created by the shortage of labour.

Between 1912 and 1932 Eritrean soldiers were permanently deployed in

Table 2.6. Percentage of the colonial army out of total male labour force.

year	size of army	total population	actively productive men	percentage
1912	5,990	330,000	82,000	7.3
1915	7,350	360,000	90,000	8.1
1925	9,080	480,000	120,000	7.5
1928	7,500	500,000	135,000	5.5
1935	60,200	600,000	150,000	40.3

Sources: For the size of the colonial army sources as cited above. The figures for the population data are approximations of the censuses of 1911, 1917, 1921, and 1931. The figures for the actively productive men are based on two assumptions: 1) women constitute about 50 per cent of the population; 2) of the remaining male population children under the age of 16 and old men constitute up to 50 per cent thus leaving a quarter of the entire population in the category of actively productive men.

Libya. In spite of incomplete documentation concerning the size of the colonial army, in relation to the available male population, the table below gives a sufficient indication of the situation affecting the colony.

Up to 1935, the adverse impact of recruitment was to some extent resolved by the use of immigrant labour from northern Ethiopia, who cultivated the land of those recruited to the army.[118] During the 1935—41 period, however, from the few studies available on the economy of the peasantry, recruitment to the colonial army appeared to have caused the virtual collapse of the subsistence economy. In a study of one of the most fertile provinces conducted in 1939, production of food crops decreased by two thirds due to recruitment.[119] According to the same source, 25,000 men out of a total population of c. 150,000 of the province had been recruited to the army.[120]

That the recruitment of Eritreans to the colonial army ran counter to the economic interests of the colony can be illustrated by pointing out the British attitude to the problem during the Second World War. In Ghana during the colonial period, the British worked under the assumption that they could not, without damaging the economy of the colony, recruit more than 2 per cent of the total population or equivalent to about 9 per cent of the active male labour force.[121] In the Eritrean case, the Italians had during the 1935—41 period a colonial army made up of about 40 per cent of the active labour force.

Eritrea as a Colony of Settlement, 1935—41

In 1931, there were 4,188 Italians.[122] The European population constituted less than one per cent of the population in Eritrea. This ratio was completely changed from the early months of 1935 onwards. In a matter of a few months,

Eritrea was transformed into a staging post and supply depot for the invading Italian army. Between April 1935 and May 1936 more than 300,000 soldiers landed in Eritrea on their way to Ethiopia. 50,000 labourers arrived from Italy to tackle the enormous problems of transportation and accommodation. Eritrea became the nerve centre of the new empire the Italians were about to construct, and during the 1935—37 period the colonial economy gave way to a war economy.

During the years up to 1941, at which time Eritrea provided colonial soldiers, the Italians turned the colony into a commercial and industrial centre for the new empire. According to the economic census of 1939, there were 2,198 industrial firms. These firms were a result of the huge inflow of Italian manpower and capital. A breakdown of these so called industrial firms makes

Table 2.7. Industrial and Commercial firms in the Italian East African empire.

Governorate	Industrial		Commercial	
	number of firms	capital in units of a million lire	number of firms	capital in units of a million lire
Eritrea	2,198	2,198	2,690	486
Somalia	584	75	659	22
Shoa	561	305	634	498
Harar	223	60	166	37
Amara	163	21	510	38
Galla-Sidana	278	71	126	33

Table 2.8. Breakdown of Eritrean Industrial Firms.

Category	Number of firms	Capital invested in units of a million lire
Construction	383	500
Transport	846	1,500
Repair workshops	227	15
Beer and tea	25	6
Chemicals	18	4
Mills and pasta	269	30
(Brick production)	241	53
Furniture	96	3
Cinematography	51	40
Graphics	13	8
Leather tanning	7	1
Textiles	3	3
Electricity	19	16
Others	—	
TOTAL	2,198	

Source: *Gli Annali dell'Africa Italiana* 3:2 (1940), pp. 116—17.

it clear (Table 2.7 and 2.8) that apart from the pre-1935 industries, the rest were service firms. (See appendix 1 for an inventory of actual industries compiled by the British soon after their occupation of Eritrea in 1941.)

With only half the population of Somalia, Eritrea had nearly four times as many industrial firms. Thirty times more capital was invested in Eritrea than in Somalia. Compared to the rest of the provinces of the new empire, Eritrea had more firms and more capital invested than all the five provinces put together. In the 'historic' Eritrea (in contrast to the 'New' Eritrea created in 1936 with the incorporation of Tigrai) the Italian population increased from 4,600 in 1934 to nearly 75,000 in 1939.[123] Eritrea had accomodated Italians, approximately 15 per cent of the entire Eritrean population, which according to the unpublished census of 1939 was said to be 614,353.[124]

In Asmara, the capital city of Eritrea, the population was divided in 1939 into 53,000 Italians and 45,000 Eritreans. Thus the Italian colonization of Ethiopia turned Eritrea into a colony of settlement, composed of colonists whose income was derived from industrial and commercial capital rather than from small-scale agriculture. Accounting for nearly 15 per cent of the entire population, the Italians in Eritrea were in a far stronger position than settlers in other colonies such as Kenya, and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). During the brief life of the Italian East African Empire, Eritrea functioned, both as an industrial and commercial depot of the new empire, and as a reservoir of cheap, efficient and easily disposable manpower for the colonial army.

Strategic versus Economic Function of Eritrea

We can periodize the colonial period into four phases. During the first phase, 1882—96, Eritrea was perceived as a potential area for settlement. Many aspects of colonialism were either not confronted or were deliberately ignored. By presenting Eritrea as the key to the problem of emigration the ruling elite in Rome attempted to avoid a confrontation between the landed gentry and the landless peasantry. The Bahta uprising of December 1894, and the Italo-Ethiopian military confrontation of 1895—96 put an end to this experimental phase.

The following phase, 1897—1906, was both a period of uncertainty (1897—1900) and of consolidation for the colonial power. During the early years, i.e. 1897—1900, Eritrea was perceived as a losing proposition. Colonies were expensive in terms of costs and manpower, and the ability of the state to change this situation proved to be extremely limited. Emigration had its own logic which the state could do little to change. The military crisis of

1895—96 lent further support to those groups which had persistently argued against colonialism.

During the 1897—1900 period, Italy was on the verge of removing colonialism from its foreign policy. That Italy remained in Eritrea, as mentioned in the introduction, was to a large measure related to African conditions rather than to other strategic or economic considerations. Paradoxically enough, the second half of the period 1900—06 witnessed the consolidation of colonial rule. Italy was able to consolidate its colonial rule firstly because of the weakness of Ethiopia, secondly because of the deepening crisis in Tigrai province, and thirdly as a result of the farsighted and pragmatic leadership of Governor Martini, who administered Eritrea during the period 1897—1907. These were important factors in themselves. An additional factor, perhaps of even greater importance, was Eritrea's new economic role, namely as a depot for transit trade and as supplier of raw material resources for export.

Governor Martini is quite rightly regarded as the statesman who single-handedly kept Eritrea for Italy. Martini's privileged background was based upon his contact with Italian Royalty, his reputation as a liberal and on his knowledge of the workings of Italian government. To this invaluable background, Martini's task was made easier because he perceived Eritrea not as a colony for settlement, but as a raw material source for Italy and as an entrepôt for the economic and commercial penetration of Ethiopia.

In the third phase, 1907—32, strategic considerations were more important than economic ones. Partly because of fears of resistance, the reorganization of the colonial economy was extremely slow. Unable to attract capital, the colonial state had to pursue a policy of little interference with the Eritrean pre-capitalist systems. Four hundred thousand hectares which had been confiscated between 1893—95 were returned to their original owners.

By 1909 the Eritrean highlands were virtually closed to Italian colonists, long before they were expressly excluded by the law of 1926. From 1908 onwards, and especially after 1912, the main function of Eritrea was to supply soldiers for the expansion and consolidation of Italian colonialism in Somalia and Libya. During the 1912—32 period Eritrea's importance was undoubtedly of a strategic nature. The Eritrean soldiers in Libya (half of them were Ethiopians who had been recruited and trained in Eritrea) were easily replaceable, extremely cheap and more efficient than Italian soldiers. Eritrean casualties in Libya were of little concern to Italy. The invasion of Libya, one of the most popular manifestations of a united and strong Italy maintained its appeal I believe, because of the low rate of casualties among the Italian soldiers.[125]

During the 1920's Eritrea became important as a destination for Italian products and also for the Italian transit trade to Ethiopia and the Arabian coast. This development was not at odds with the Eritrean commitment to the Libyan war, as it was, instead, a manifestation of the expanding Italian industrial and commercial economy. The Eritrean import/export trade dramatically increased in the period 1921—32 due to Eritrea's role in the transit of goods to Ethiopia and the Arabian coast. Throughout this third phase, Italian policy was concerned with adding Ethiopia to Italy's sphere of influence. In other words, the Italians wanted Ethiopia as a hinterland for Eritrea.

In contrast to the second phase, the third phase was characterized by liberal attitudes to relations between the colonizers and the colonized. The main difference affected the so-called 'native policy'. Martini, 1897—1907 had been against the extension of education to Eritreans, because of its potential dangers to cheap and peaceful colonial rule. In contrast, later colonial governors, in particular Salvago-Raggi, 1907—14 and J. Gasparini, 1923—28, pursued and implemented a more liberal attitude toward schools and education. These policies are treated in some detail in chapter three below.

The fourth phase, 1932—41, was essentially characterized by the invasion and pacification of Ethiopia. Eritrea's value was both as a staging post for the invading army and also as a reservoir of men for the colonial army. Between 1935 and 1941, the colony provided over 60,000 men many of whom were used as cannon fodder against the Ethiopian army. The census of 1939 estimated the total population to be 617,000, and from these figures it has been deduced that as much as 40 per cent of Eritrea's active men joined the colonial army. Already undermined during the 1920's local production was now virtually set aside. At the same time as Eritrea produced its legendary men of arms for the colonial army, Italy turned the colony into one of settlement, in which the Italian population grew from less than 1 per cent in 1931 to 2 per cent of the entire Eritrean population by 1939. By the mid 1930's Eritrea had become a colony of settlement which, however, bore no resemblance to what had been envisaged during the 1890—95 period.

That the Italians were frustrated in their grand plan was largely due to external factors, but they succeeded admirably in making Eritrea fulfill their demands i.e. the Eritrean colonial army was, by and large, loyal and efficient. During the 1936—41 period, none of the 60,000 Eritrean colonial soldiers were stationed in the colony itself.

Within half a century of colonialism, the colonial power attempted to use Eritrea according to its needs and its capability. This study of the economic and non-economic roles to which Eritrea was subjected explains in an oblique way the societal and economic changes which took place in Italy rather than those which occurred in Eritrea. As we shall attempt to show in the succeeding two chapters on educational and native policies, the prime concern of Italy was the control of social and economic changes in Eritrea in such a manner that conflict between the interests of Italy and those of the Eritreans did not become unmanageable.

FOOTNOTES

I am greatly indebted to the economic historian Yemane Misghena, University of Lund, who read several drafts of this chapter and made accessible his source material.

1. Romain Rainero, *I primi tentativi di colonizzazione agricola e di popolamento dell'Eritrea, 1890—95*, Milano, 1960; Richard Pankhurst, 'Italian Settlement Policy in Eritrea and its Repercussions, 1889—1896' *Boston University Papers on African History*, vol. 1., 1964, Bennet, N., ed., pp. 121—56. The section on settlement policy is greatly based on the works of both authors but especially on that of Rainero since it was based on sources not available to this author. While both authors conclude their studies in 1895 and 1896 respectively, this study carries on to explain the reasons of why the metropole did not revive the policy after 1900 when it was in a position to do so.

2. Leopoldo Franchetti, *Atti Parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, Appendice alla relazione annuale sulla Colonia Eritrea, 28 Aprile, 1894*, Roma, 1894; Ferdinando Martini, *Relazione sulla colonia Eritrea per gli esercizi, 1901—1902*, Roma 1902; Idem., *Relazione sulla colonia Eritrea per gli esercizi, 1905—1907*, 4 vols., Roma, 1913.

3. Mori, A., *Manuale di legislazione della colonia Eritrea, 1890—1914*, 7 vols. Roma, 1916. The *Statistica del Commercio della colonia Eritrea* published with few exceptions in Eritrea constituted the main source for colonial reviews such as *Rassegna Economica delle Colonie* issued in Rome by the Ministry of Colonies.

4. Bartolommei-Gioli, G., 'La colonizzazione dell'Eritrea', *Bollettino dell'Emigrazione*, 1906, pp. 221—57; Paoli, R., *Nella colonia Eritrea*, Roma, 1908; Peglion, O., et. al., *La colonia Eritrea: condizioni e problemi*, Roma, 1913; Pollera, A., *La vita commerciale etiopica e la circolazione monetaria eritrea*, Tivoli, 1926; Piccioli, A., *La nuova italia d'oltremare*, 2 vols., Roma, 1933; Santagata, F., *La colonia Eritrea nel Mar Rosso davanti all'Abissinia*, Napoli, 1935.

5. The sources deposited in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, i.e. the Archivio Eritrea and those of the former Ministry of Colonies (ASMAI) are subject to fifty years rule. In actual fact, the researcher is denied access to pre 1935 material on the grounds that the material requested happens to be located in a file containing post-1935 material. The problem of access to sources is compounded by the substantial withdrawal of files from AE and ASMAI into a working archive known as the *Archivio del Comitato*, created by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to facilitate the publication under its auspicies a series of studies on Italian activities in Africa under the covering title *L'Italia in Africa*.

6. *Relazione generale della Commissione d'Inchiesta sulla colonia Eritrea*, Roma, 1891, pp. 182—93; Rainero, *I Primi tentativi di colonizzazione*, pp. 56—58.

7. Two rather contradictory approaches were in the forefront. Prime Minister Crispi and the Royal Commission of Enquiry of 1891 recommended what they called *colonizzazione libera* where the pattern of settlement would be left to the laws of the market. The other view was that of L. Franchetti who argued that proprietary rights be given only to small cultivators under state subsidy. Rainero, *I primi tentativi*, p. 57.

8. AP: *Appendice alla relazione annuale sulla colonia Eritrea* dell'Onorevole Barone L. Franchetti, 28.4.1894, pp. 3, 14, 15.

9. Rainero, *I primi tentativi*, p. 58.

10. AP (discussioni) 14.5.1890, quoted in Rainero, *I primi tentativi*, p. 58.

11. *Relazione generale della Regio Commissione sulla colonia Eritrea*, 1891, p. 178, on the existence of extensive lands which could be accessible to Italian colonists. See also pp. 182—87 on the forms of uninhibited settlement to those who possess funds. On pages 190—91 the Commisson of Enquiry noted that it would take some time before sending to Eritrea a considerable flow of emigrants (*una larga corrente d'emigrazione*), because colonial rule has yet to be established throughout the colony and Italy ought not, at this period, aggravate further its budget.

12. Ibid., p. 186.

13. The list of colonists (61 individuals grouped into 9 families) transported and settled at the expense of the state is included in Franchetti's report to Parliament dated 28.4.1894, cited above.

14. Ibid., p. 17.

15. Ibid..

16. Ibid., p. 18.

17. Rainero, *I primi tentativi*, p. 59.

18. ASMAI pos. 31/2 file 2. Governor Baratieri to Franchetti, 31.1.1893, where he pointed out that the confiscation of vast areas would alarm the indigenous people and thus create sentiments of opposition, a phenomenon he wished to avoid. The security of the colony Baratieri argued ought to be a result of good relations with the local population. He concluded by stating that Italian colonists need not be settled in empty areas but among the indigenous population and without making adversaries of them. This letter is included in Rainero's *I primi tentativi*, pp. 197—202.

19. BUCE 15.5.1895, Bando di O. Baratieri sulle concessioni.

20. Baratieri was fully aware that the main cause for the Bahta uprising was Italian confiscation of land. See his report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in ASMAI, pos. 3/7 file 50, dated 22.12.1894.

21. BUCE, Decreto Governatoriale, 30.6.1895, sulla colonizzazione, abrogating the office of Franchetti.

22. Prime Minister Crispi resigned on March 5 1896 and was succeeded by Di Rudini who renounced his predecessor's expansionist policies. Between March 1896 and October 1897 Italy debated whether to remain in Eritrea with peaceful relations with Ethiopia or to withdraw altogether from the colony. Extensive discussions were held

as late as May 1897 (see AP (Discussioni 14.5 to 21.5) pp. 653—945) on the fate of the colony. The matter was put to vote and the position of Di Rudini won with a wide margin. Di Rudini had argued that Italian colonial presence in Eritrea ought to be based on peaceful relations with Ethiopia. While Di Rudini campaigned for his policy in parliament, he sounded secretly the Belgian king Leopold if he would be interested to take over Eritrea. The Ministers of Finance and Foreign Affairs were behind the secret negotiations. See C. Seton-Watson, *Italy From Liberalism to Fascism, 1870—1925*, p. 184. See also Rainero, *L'anticolonialismo italiano da Assab ad Adua*, Milano, 1971, pp. 352—54.

23. The Land Act of 1909 (R.D. 31.1.1909, no. 378) declared in its second article that 'the rights of the population over lands which they currently possess in accordance with ancient local customs shall be respected'. The Land Act of 1926 went even further and stated that henceforth land for the purpose of cultivation may not be conceded to Italian colonists (R.D. 7.2.1926, no. 269, article 9).

24. Rainero, *I primi tentativi*, p. 143.

25. Pankhurst, 'Italian Settlement Policy', pp. 151—52.

26. Bologna, L. M., 'L'avvaloramento in Eritrea', *L'Italia in Africa: Serie economia-agraria*, vol. 1, tome 2, Roma, 1970, p. 65.

27. Cf. Rochat, G., *Il colonialismo italiano*, Roma, 1975.

28. Bartolommei-Gioli, G., and Checchi, M., 'La colonizzazione dell'Eritrea', *L'Eritrea economica*, ed., F. Martini Novara, 1913, p. 285; Peglion, O., et. al., *La colonia Eritrea: condizioni e problemi*, Roma, 1913, p. 54; Matteoda, Carlo, 'Il pensiero dei pionieri sulla valorizzazione economico-agraria della colonia Eritrea', *Atti del primo congresso di studi coloniali*, vol. 6, Firenze, 1931, p. 341.

29. For the scope and extent of resistance see chapter five below.

30. For the relations between Crispi who wanted to pursue total war and with the necessary funds and the 'bourgeoise of the North of Italy' which denied him funds, see Battaglia, R., *La prima guerra d'Africa*, Torino, 1958, p. 714.

31. This was the position put forward by the Royal Commission of Enquiry on Eritrea of 1891, p. 191; Bartolommei-Gioli, G., 'La colonizzazione' (1906), p. 261.

32. Gramsci, A., *Prison Notebooks*, pp. 67—68.

33. The treaty of July 10, 1900, was more favourable than the treaty of Wichale of 1889, in that few more villages from Eritrean highlands were ceded to Italy. The treaty is reproduced in Carlo Rossetti, *Storia diplomatica dell'Etiopia durante il regno di Menelik*, Torino, 1910, pp. 247—50, and widely commented by Ruffilo Perini (alias Gabre-Negus), 'L'Eritrea e i suoi nuovi confini', *Rivista Moderna Politica e Leteraria*, 6:1 (1902) 100— 17.

34. First used by Ostini, G., in 'La nostra espansione coloniale e l'Eritrea', *Nuova Antologia*, May 1913, p. 1, it meant that colonialism ought to combine the needs for economic benefits with due respect for the rights, traditions and interests of the colonized. The term *imperialismo sano* is also used by Grassi, F., *L'Imperialismo coloniale italiano da Adua ad Impero*, Bari, 1981, p. 183, although the author provides no explanation either for its origin or for its scope.

35. Bartolommei-Gioli, G., 'La colonizzazione', 1906, p. 240.

36. Ibid., p. 266.

37. Ibid., pp. 257—63.

38. Amin, S., 'Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa: Historical Origin', *Journal of Peace Research*, 2:1 (1972), p. 115.

39. Istituto agricolo coloniale italiano, *L'Economia Eritrea, 1882—1932*, p. 48. The source is derived from Beccari, O., *In Mar Rosso*, Roma, 1879, without precise citation.

40. Checchi, M., *Movimento commerciale della colonia Eritrea, 1897—1910*, Roma, 1912, p. 8.

41. Ibid., p. 12.

42. Ibid.; From 1897 until 1932 colonial policy rested on a policy of good neighbourhood with Ethiopia. The key element in this policy were the Tigrinyans and their attachment to the Ethiopian state. In the early 1910's, the colonial state, for instance, chose to enter into conflict over land with Italian colonists rather than give in to their demands on the grounds that confiscation of land would create hostile climate both in Eritrea and in Ethiopia. See ASMAI pos. 11/8, file 73. As late as 1930, the setting aside of c. 5000 hectares for Italian and Eritrean coffee cultivators caused serious protests from the Italian delegation in Ethiopia as a policy adversely affecting relations between Italy and Ethiopia. For further discussion see Chapter Five below.

43. In 1918, the Minister of Colonies Colosimo informed his parliamentary colleagues that Eritrea was primarily a colony of transit trade. The redefinition of the role of Eritrea, according to my understanding constrained the colonial state from pursuing policies that might create political unrest among the Tigrinyans who maintained, albeit unarticulated, sentiments of Ethiopianism. Although there were other reasons such as the role of Eritrean soldiers in Libya, an important consideration for the Land Act of 1926 was to create a conducive climate for the implementation of the role of Eritrea as an outlet of Ethiopian import/export trade.

44. Santagata, F., *La colonia Eritrea*, 1935, pp. 131—34.

45. Coffee imports and exports, 1927—32 in a unit of a thousand lire:

year	imports	exports
1927	30,658	23,876
1928	37,550	32,870
1929	33,231	24,634
1930	35,583	25,350
1931	44,049	31,756
1932	22,003	31,756

Source: Santagata, *La colonia Eritrea*, p. 141 for imports and p. 147 for exports. For Eritrean attempts at coffee production, see Angelo Piccioli, *La nouva Italia d'Oltremare*, Milano, 1933, vol. 1, p. 671.

46. Santagata, *La colonia Eritrea*, pp. 141, 147. Concerning inflation of the lire, see Clough, S., *The Economic History of Modern Italy*, Columbia, 1964, pp. 197—98.

47. Ibid., pp. 131—34.

48. Ibid., p. 164.

49. FO371/69370, Four Power Commission Report on Eritrea, Chapter Five: Trade and Industry, p. 52.

50. Hence the aggregate Eritrean import/export figures reproduced by Italian economic historians do not reflect the productivity of the colony. Cf. Irma Taddia, 'Intervento pubblico e capitale privato nella colonia Eritrea', *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 15:2 (1985) p. 240.

51. Coquery-Vidrovitch, C., 'The Colonial Economy of the former French, Belgian and Portuguese zones, 1914—1935', in *Africa Under Colonial Domination, 1880—1935*, ed., Boahen, A., Heinemann, 1985, p. 353.

52. See Mazzei, J., 'La politica doganale coloniale e i problemi che ne derivano', *Atti del primo congresso di studi coloniali*, Firenze, 1931, vol.2, pp. 72—92. In 1927 for instance, Eritrean exports to Italy were in the range of 0.1 billion lire. Total Italian imports for the same year were over 15 billion lire, p. 78.

53. Exports of Italian African Colonies, 1922—1930 in thousands of lire.

	1922	1924	1926	1928	1930
Eritrea	31,623	87,901	97,852	93,712	76,279
Somalia	10,988	16,780	29,033	42,330	47,955
Cyrennaica	9,773	20,467	25,930	45,246	28,393
Tripolitania	13,654	25,204	45,246	28,393	36,136

Source: Extracted from *Rassegna Economica delle Colonie*, 20:12 (1933) pp. 1131—44.

54. Cf. Tomasso Tittoni, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, London, 1914, pp. 273—75; Paoli, *Nella colonia Eritrea*, (1908) p. 112. For the post 1920 period, the question of the performance of the colony appeared to be no longer an important issue in itself, most probably in view of the new role of the colony as a depot of transit trade.

Both Piccioli (1933) and Santagata (1935) simply noted that Eritrea had hardly any industries.

55. Renzo Sertolis Salis, in his study on the Eritrean Land Act, *L'Ordinamento fondiario eritreo*, Padova, 1932, p. 91, pointed out that virtually none of the Italian colonists cultivated the land by themselves instead they leased it on the basis of sharecropping to the Eritreans.

56. Peglion, et. al., *La colonia Eritrea*, p. 60.

57. Piccioli, *La nuova Italia d'Oltremare*, Milano, 1933, vol. 1, p. 652.

58. Bologna, L. M., 'L'avvaloramento', p. 74.

59. Piccioli, *La nuova Italia*, vol. 1, p. 652.

60. Istituto agricolo coloniale, *L'Economia Eritrea, 1882—1932*, Firenze, 1932, p. 11.

61. Irma Taddia, *L'Eritrea — Colonia, 1890—1952*, Milano, 1986, p. 244.

62. See appendix 1 for the concession companies.

63. In this regard the farming out of over 10,000 hectares to a single company for the collection and export of palma dum (a product used for the manufacturing of buttons) could be cited. Santagata, *La colonia Eritrea*, p. 122.

64. Ibid., pp. 100—28.

65. Ibid., pp. 115—16.

66. Southard, A. E., *Eritrea: Special Consular Reports no. 82*, Washington, 1920, p. 21.

67. AE, Pacco 531 contains figures for cattle export from northern Ethiopia for the meat canning factory at Asmara.

68. Santagata, *La colonia Eritrea*, (1935) p. 106; for the post 1935 gold production, *Africa Italiana*, 2:7—8 (1939), pp. 41— 42.

69. *Africa Italiana*, 2:7—8 (1939), p. 42.

70. Ibid..

71. This estimation is based on the intensity of commercial and industrial activity of the colony as presented by Piccioli (1933) and Santagata (1935).

72. The contribution of the Italian state to the Eritrean budget varied from year to year. See Taddia, 'Intervento pubblico', pp. 216—18 for a yearly subsidy to the colonial budget.

73. Cf. Piccioli, *La nuova Italia d'Oltremare*, vol. 1, p. 629.

74) See Lefevre, R., *Terra nostra d'Africa, 1932—35*, Milano, 1942, pp. 184—86 where the author argues that the land law of 1926 made the development of commercial agriculture in the highlands difficult. The author also emphasized that the land law was motivated by political reasons.

75. See Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism*, London, 1984, pp. 42—43.

76. Istituto agricolo coloniale, *L'Economia Eritrea*, pp. 76—80.

77. Coquery-Vidrovitch, C., 'The African Mode of Production', *Relations of Production*, ed., D. Seddon, London, 1978, pp. 209—57.

78. See my 'Land Tenure and the Organization of Surplus Appropriation on the eve of the colonial period', *Notes on Nationalism and Resistance in Eritrea, 1890—1940*, pp. 22—36.

79. Cf. Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia*, London, 1960, especially pp. 389—400.

80. One of the reasons why Europe managed to impose its colonial rule was because of the compatibility of primarily economic interests between the European (capitalist) system and the pre-capitalist systems of the colonized world. See Ronald Robinson, 'Indigenous Basis of Imperialism: A sketch for the theory of collaboration', Bob Sutcliffe and Roger Owen eds., *Studies in the theory of Imperialism*, London, 1972, pp. 118—42. See also my 'Resistance and Collaboration, 1890—1914', *Notes on Nationalism and Resistance in Eritrea*, pp. 36—48.

81. That colonialism brought very little restructuring of the indigenous system is fully discussed in Wallerstein, I., *Historical Capitalism*, London, 1983. More specifically, the predominance of precapitalist system in Africa is treated in Göran Hydén, *No Short Cuts to Progress*, London, 1983, pp. 191— 213.

82. For the role of the Eritreans in the colonial system see chapters three and four below. For the role of the African during the colonial period in general see Michael Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, London, 1967, pp. 345—48.

83. Proletarianization presupposes that the proletariat survives solely on wages earned, a necessary precondition for a break with precapitalist system.

84. See my 'Resistance and Collaboration', pp. 45—48.

85. By the 1920's the vaccination campaign against cattle diseases was virtually complete thus laying down the basis for a considerable increase in the livestock patrimony. The consequences of the serious drought of 1926—29, for instance was greatly minimized by the importation of cereals from abroad, as can be clearly seen from the Statistica del commercio della colonia Eritrea for 1926—29. For further discussion, see Chapter Six below.

86. See Leuthy, *France against Herself*, New York, 1957, p. 259.

87. AE 947. Governor Salvago-Raggi to MAE, 25.3.1908; Robert Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, Chicago, 1966, p. 110.

88. ASMAI pos. 115/2, file 2, Salvago-Raggi to MAE, 20.2.1912.

89. Ibid..

90. AE 373.

91. Ibid..

92. ASMAI pos. 115/2, file 15, MC to Salvago-Raggi, Rome, 17.7.1914.

93. Ibid..

94. A newly recruited soldier could expect to be promoted four times. AE is replete with letters from ex-soldiers seeking chieftainship on the merit of their military service.

95. See appendix 2: Note on salaries and prices of basic food-crops.

96. Conscription started only on the eve of the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1934 and continued until the end of the period.

97. ASMAI pos. 115/1, file 6, Ordini permanenti, anno 1912: Corpo Eritreo da inviarsi in Libia, 20.2.1912.

98. ACS-MAI B. 1, file 1. MC Ufficio Militare: Reipilogo della forza presente nelle colonie alla data 1.4.1925.

99. Ibid., 30.4.1928.

100. Cf. Giorgio Rochat, *Militari e politici nella preparazione della campagna d'Etiopia: Studi e Documenti, 1932—1936*, Milano, 1971, pp. 33—40, who dates July 1933 as the decisive moment. Del Boca in *Gli Italiani in Africa Orientale: La conquista dell'Impero*, Bari, 1979, p. 169, argues that the decisive moment was 1932.

101. Ministero della Guerra, *La campagna 1935—36 in Africa Orientale*, vol. 1, p. 108.

102. Ibid., p. 123.

103. ACS Carte Badoglio, B.4, file 6, doc. no. 52, dated 25.5.1934.

104. Ibid..

105. Ibid., doc. no. 109, dated 14.11.1934. Ibid., doc. no. 131, dated 19.1.1935 where it was stated that 61,700 Eritreans were recruited.

106. Governo Generale dell'Africa Orientale, Stato Maggiore, *Il Primo anno dell'impero*, Addis Ababa, 1938, vol. 1, p. 44.

107. ACS Fondo Graziani, Governor Graziani to Minister of Colonies, Lessona, dispatch 51183, dated 4.11.1937.

108. Giovanni Simonini, 'La regione del Serae', *Gli Annali dell'Africa Italiana*, 3:3 (1940), p. 122, where 25,000 men were recruited to the colonial army from only one of the five administrative districts.

109. ACS Fondo Graziani, Minister of Colonies, Lessona, 8.11.1937, instructing Graziani to reduce metropolitan forces for reasons of budget.

110. Peglion, *La colonia Eritrea*, 1913, p. 44.

111. Ibid..

112. Ibid., p. 65.

113. ASMAI pos. 3/21, file 180, Intelligence report to MC, 6—13 May and 14—21 August 1914.

114. ASMAI pos. 115/2, file 15, MC to governor of Eritrea, 17.7.1914.

115. Ibid., Salvago-Raggi to MC, 11.9.1914.

116. Ibid..

117. Ibid..

118. This was noted in the brief anonymous commentary on the census of 1931, published in the *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*, 72 (1935) p. 319.

119. Simonini, 'La regione del Serae', *Gli Annali dell'Africa Italiana*, 3:3 (1940), p. 122.

120. Ibid..

121. David Killingway, 'Military and Labour Recruitment in the Gold Coast during the Second World War', *Journal of African History*, 23:1 (1982), p. 86.

122. *VII Censimento generale della popolazione*, 21.4.1931, Rome, 1935, p. 34.

123. Vittorio Castellano, 'La popolazione italiana dell'Eritrea dal 1924 al 1940', *Rivista Italiana di demografia e statistica*, 1:4 (1948), p. 539. Idem., 'Il censimento del 1939 della popolazione indigena della Eritrea e lo sviluppo della popolazione indigena della Eritrea storica, in un cinquantennio di amministrazione italiana', *Rivista Italiana di demografia e statistica*, 1:2 (1948), p. 272.

124. Ibid..

125. The pacification of Libya that began in 1912 ended officially in 1932. Due to terrain and nature of Libyan resistance, soldiers from colonies such as Eritrea were better suited than Italians. Moreover, Eritrean casualties were not only of little concern to Italy but were cheaply compensated. Close relatives to Eritreans killed in Libya were paid a compensation equivalent to two months salary of the deceased. For such a list of payment see ASMAI pos. 115/2, file 10, dated 25.9.1912: Sussidi agli eredi degli ascari morti in Libia.

In 1925, the total forces in Libya was made up of 11,320 Italians and 21,715 colonial soldiers, i.e. from Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia and including Libya. The preponderance of colonial soldiers in the pacification of Libya indicates strongly that Italian casualties could be reasonably controlled. For distribution of forces, see ACS-MAI, busta 1 file 2. Ministero delle Colonie, Riepilogo della forza presente nelle varie colonie alla data 1 aprile 1925.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IDEOLOGY OF COLONIALISM: EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PRAXIS

Scope, State of Research and Source Materials

The purpose of this chapter is to explain colonial relations by focussing on colonial educational policies and the extent to which they were put into practice. The colonial state was solely responsible for educational policies, but it shared responsibility for their implementation with the Catholic mission.[1] The questions which this chapter aims to answer are: 1) what role did colonial education play in the maintenance of colonial rule? 2) how did the colonial state perceive the spread of education and what measures did it take to regulate and streamline it?

An important point of departure, albeit slightly outdated is the study conducted by R. De Marco in 1943: *The Italianization of Africans: Italian Colonial Educational Policy*. The task of the study was to document the objectives of colonial education in all Italian territories. The author was convinced that the purpose of colonial education was 'assimilation' and 'Italianization of the natives', terms used as mutually exclusive. 'Assimilation' wrote De Marco,

> was used by the Italians to bring about a change in the native mental outlook; it implied a desire to impress the native with the greatness of Italian civilization; it sought to gain his respect for Italy's colonizing ability; and it attempted to convince him of the singular privilege of being under the domination of modern Rome. In carrying out this policy of Italianizing the native, the government colonial school for indigenous people played a very important role.[2]

De Marco's understanding of the terms 'assimilation' and 'Italianization' is diffuse when compared to for example, the French Colonial System. According to the French Colonial policy of Assimilation, the ultimate goal was to bring the colonized to the level of the colonizer, through among other things, the introduction and spread of western educational system.[3] As I shall discuss below, the objectives of Italian colonial educational policy had very little to do with either assimilation or Italianization.

De Marco's study was based on policy statements and on published literature. Apart from a couple of colonial text books developed for Libyan students, the author had no access to those that were available in Eritrea.[4] On the basis of literature concerned with Italian aspirations for colonial education, De Marco stated that 'Italy had succeeded to a considerable degree in Italianizing those peoples who attended government schools and who were enrolled in the native organizations'.[5] He concluded that 'on the whole, the Italian public school for natives tended to carry out a policy of gradual cultural assimilation of the natives'.[6]

In the Eritrean context, the conclusions of De Marco are of limited relevance. Firstly, his assertion of Italy's success in Italianizing those who attended government schools cannot be substantiated. Native education was limited to the equivalent of grade three in Italy. Even if we agree with the author as to the purposes of colonial education, the length of schooling was far too short for De Marco to conclude that Italy had succeeded in its policy of 'Italianization' and 'gradual cultural assimilation'. As late as 1931, those Eritreans who knew rudimentary Italian constituted only 1.1 per cent of the entire population. Although knowledge of Italian implied neither 'Italianization' nor 'cultural assimilation', the census figure indicates the result of very limited colonial education.[7]

Secondly, the author's conclusions are both confusing and contradictory when he fails to consider colonial education as part of the context of colonialism and colonial rule. Apart from instruction in rudimentary Italian and some notions about the greatness of Italy,[8] the Italians made it clear, through their native policy, that they were opposed to any form of 'Italianization' or 'cultural assimilation'.[9] If De Marco had looked into Italian native policy, he would have confronted the difficulties of reconciling colonial education with the policies of native administration.

The main problem for a study of colonial native education policy is the paucity of published contemporary source material and the fragmentary nature of archival sources. Contemporary sources can be divided into two types: those concerned with an empirical description of school organization, and those explaining the motives that gave rise to this particular educational system. Both types of source leave much to be desired, and the few policy-oriented studies that exist are also highly eulogistic of fascist reforms.[10]

A far more serious shortcoming is the fragmentary nature of the archival source material. This results from the fact that schools were not obliged to provide reports to the colonial administration until 1932. The establishment in 1932 of the Post of School Superintendent in Eritrea assisted in documenting the school system although it was unfortunate that the post was occupied by a zealous politician and propagandist whose interest in documentation was politically motivated.[11] Nevertheless, the archival source material from AE

and the *Comitato archive* have been invaluable for information on the organization and functioning of the school system. The archival source material, although incomplete and fragmented, has made it possible to show the wide gap between policy and practice.

The second type of sources is the colonial text-books which were used in Eritrean native schools. These textbooks were published in Eritrea and provide insights into the praxis of colonial education. These textbooks, eight in number, were not accessible to De Marco and hence have not been examined before.

The Colonial Government and Native Education

Although the colonial government was not alone in furthering native education it was, however, responsible for defining its extent and orientation. As the ultimate source of authority on native education, the colonial government evolved and implemented three distinct policies at various phases of colonial rule.

During the first decade of colonial rule, i.e. 1897—1907, the colonial administration perceived native education as a process of elevating the native to intellectual parity with Italian citizens. This process, it was thought, could give Eritreans the basis to challenge colonial rule. Justifying his refusal to open schools for the native population, the Eritrean governor Ferdinando Martini wrote:

> First point, no, and again no mixed schools for whites and blacks. The native child, more agile and alert, has the intelligence of the white child; therefore avoid confrontation. ... Schools for blacks? Is it worth their establishment? ... We can not use the native in postal and telegraph services. And happy the day when we do not even require the services of the natives as interpreters. ... As for aping some Italian, they can learn it by themselves.[12]

Martini saw a threat to colonialism from educated Eritreans, and the undermining effect of education on colonialism. His negative policy towards native schools was based on the belief that an educated population could challenge the basis of colonialism and thus make colonial rule unduly expensive, if not impossible to maintain. Colonies, Martini argued, were created by arms and were maintained by the aura of prestige that surrounded the European colonizer.[13] In other words, colonies could be kept only by a strict separation of races, by the cultivation of European prestige vis-à-vis the colonized and by denying the native population access to western education. Martini was unwilling to accept that the colonial state had the power to direct native education towards politically harmless objectives as his successors were later to prove.

The primary concern of Martini was to consolidate colonial rule and his negative views on native education were generally accepted by others at a time when colonial rule was not yet firmly established. From another angle, Martini's views were based more on ideological beliefs which in fact had very little to do with the consolidation of colonial rule. For Martini the colonial dictum appeared to run as follows: the business of colonialism was absolute domination over the colonized in the interests of the colonizer.

The policy of no schooling for Eritreans was drastically changed by Governor Salvago-Raggi, who succeeded Martini at the beginning of 1907. A career diplomat with long service in Cairo and Peking, the new Governor intervened in matters of native education by establishing state schools. In 1911 the first government school was established in Keren for the children of Muslim chiefs and other notables.[14] The school was modelled on the British colonial schools at Kessela in the Sudan and Alexandria in Egypt.[15] The school at Keren, and others which were subsequently established,[16] were expected to produce educated workers for the postal and telegraphic services, a development which ten years earlier had been strongly rejected by Governor Martini. The schools followed a curriculum which had been developed on an ad hoc basis, and which was different from that pursued in Italy.[17]

Although the initiative for the new school had been taken by the Governor and was within the budget for the colony, Rome remained the ultimate source of authority. The ideological framework for native education was outlined by the then Foreign Minister in reply to Governor Salvago-Raggi's request for funds to open other schools. The Foreign Minister, Di San Giuliano, wrote that the Governor could indeed proceed with his plans within the limits of his budget. At the same time he warned the governor to be careful not to create mental and moral imbalance among the natives who, he stressed, had an infantile mentality!.[18]

In 1916, the colonial state issued a policy document on native education.[19] Distributed to all commissioners and mission leaders, the document dealt with the motives and commitment of the colonial state to native education. It was explained that although education was an obligation of the colonial power as part of its civilizing mission, political reasons necessitated clear guidelines. The document pointed out the potential of the school to transform the spirit and intellect of the native.[20]

Without further explaining the potential impact of school on the native, the document proceeded to recommend that district commissioners and mission school leaders pay more attention to and encourage traditional schools run by monasteries and mosques. Private school organizers were advised to develop a programme which was distinct from Italian education, and to limit native

schooling to the equivalent of the first three years of elementary education in Italy.[21]

The document did not explain the political reasons for formulating clear guidelines nor was it clear in its policy prescriptions. However two main conclusions can be drawn from it. Firstly, the desire of the colonial state to limit native education to lower elementary education, and secondly, the awareness of the school's transformative potential for the mental and psychological outlook of the Eritrean.

In 1927 the Minister of Colonies Luigi Federezoni set out new policy guidelines when he wrote that, the natives twenty years thereafter would be what the Italian educational institutions had made them.[22] The clear association which Martini perceived 20 years before was now firmly established by the Minister's acceptance of the role of education in the colony. The minister did not go into the details of what kind of an Eritrean Italy wanted to create through education. This was presumably left to experts on the subject. One of these experts was Rodolfo Micacchi, the Director of Education in the Ministry of Colonies, who was also instrumental in implementing school reforms in the Italian colony of Libya.[23]

Another expert who developed the connection between education and colonial rule was Professor Mininni Caracciolo. The Professor wrote:

> We have to recognize from the outset that the teaching of natives along the same lines as in Europe has produced most sad and dangerous results for the natives as well as for the colonizers. It is therefore necessary that native education be adapted as much as possible to the conditions and needs of the native and to the character and specific exigencies of colonialism.[24]

He further argued that native education, although the most ponderous obligation of the colonizer, could be a useful instrument for the peaceful penetration and moral conquest of the native. Moreover the duty to educate the native ought to go hand in hand with the political, economic, administrative and military interests of the colonizer.

On the basis of his wide reading, Professor Caracciolo pointed out that colonial schools tended to alienate their pupils from their natural environment. This danger, advised the author, could be easily avoided by giving the native an education based on his own particular social and economic milieu and by making education a purely practical affair.[25] In this way school would contribute to ameliorating the life of the native by allowing him the benefits of improvement (introduced by Italians in pursuance of their civilizing mission) without deviating the native from his environment. Finally the author attempted to provide a solution to two criticisms. The first was the assertion that the educated native was much more difficult to govern than his non-educated brother, and the second was the allegation by the enemies of colonial education that it invariably prepared the ground for the demise of European power.

The author challenged these views by arguing that the colonial power could prevent this by adequately controling native education and thus preventing school from being transmuted into a force for the subversion and dissolution of colonial domination.[26]

From 1934 native education in Eritrea was primarily justified for its usefulness in consolidating colonial rule. The Superintendent of Schools, Andrea Festa was closely associated with colonial policy on native education. Policy assumed a clarity missing during the earlier phase. Defining the scope of education, Festa explained:

> The child ought to know something of our civilization in order to make him a conscious propagandist among the families who live far away inland. And through our educational policy, the native should know of Italy, her glories and her ancient history in order to become a conscious militant behind the shadow of our flag.[27]

In reforming the school system, Festa instructed that courses in hygiene and geography be expanded while the teaching of contentious historical issues such as the Risorgimento and other such issues were to be entirely omitted.[28] With this kind of reformed curriculum, he thought that school could not but benefit the natives, 'our future soldiers of Italy'.[29] The reformed system freed the government from concern that Eritreans would be exposed to an educational programme available to Italian nationals.

While Festa, Caracciolo and De Leone argued their case for limiting native education to lower elementary school on political grounds, other additional reasons were developed in the 1930's. The view that Africans were pathologically inferior, already argued by a renowned Italian anthropologist since 1932, assumed more relevance after the establishment of the Italian African empire in 1936.[30]

In an international conference organized by the Italian Academy the delegation from Rome used a two-pronged argument in explaining their views on colonial relations in general and native education in particular. At the general level of colonial relations the Italian position, as expressed by the anthropologist, Professor Lidio Cipriani, argued that the destiny of Africa was to be ruled by Europe because of their retarded mental capability Africans were unable to rule Africa to Europe's satisfaction.[31] He stressed the point that the purpose of colonialism was to rule, rather than prepare Africans for autonomy. Cipriani challenged France and Britain to admit this truth rather than to continue to pursue a false policy of preparing Africans for autonomy.[32]

Supporting Professor Cipriani on the alleged pathological and incurable inferiority of the blacks, the ex-governor of Italian Somaliland wrote that the continued presence of colonialism depended, in addition to the use of force, on the separation of races at all levels and in particular schools. 'Endowed

with good memory which is less distracted by observation and reflection', argued the former governor, 'the native child excels his white counterpart in the first years of schooling'. So the author advised that in order to maintain 'our superiority over the native we have to educate him separately'.[33]

Outlining the programme of colonial education, the Minister of Colonies Giuseppe Bottai wrote that the indigenous, for evident reasons of prestige, ought not to be educated but only instructed. Elaborating the distinction between education and instruction, the Minister stressed that the objectives of native education are not to produce masters of skills like ours but expert manual labourers within their limited capability.[34]

Whereas separate education remained the norm throughout the colonial period, the limiting of native education to a lower elementary level became more emphasized during the 1932—41 period.

Objectives of Education as derived from Colonial Textbooks

In the period up to 1932 there were three kinds of schools for Eritreans. There were schools run by the colonial administration, others run by the Catholic mission, and lastly, those owned and managed by the Swedish mission.[35] In the government schools teachers followed the Italian curriculum with a few necessary modifications. From 1923 onwards the government schools were handed over to the Catholic mission, whose contribution in Italian colonies was described as highly patriotic.[36] Thus from 1923 until 1941, Eritrean education was in the hands of the Catholic mission.[37] However, the colonial government maintained a supervisory role through a central office for primary education[38] and remained responsible for the military training of students.[39]

The textbooks here under examination are those published by the Catholic mission from 1912 onwards. They were the only textbooks printed in Asmara (most of them in Italian and Tigrinya) and were widely accessible to the urban population. Government textbooks for Libyan students and those written after 1936 for the newly created Italian East African Empire could hardly have been used in Eritrea by the Catholic mission because of the entrenched position of the Church as the only institution responsible for colonial education.[40]

Between 1912 and 1930 a total of eight textbooks were produced by the Catholic mission. The first manual of 1912 was divided in two parts: the first in Italian and the second in Tigrinya.[41] It contained eight chapters and five

appendices. Chapter one dealt with the history and progress of human civilization using as a point of departure the simple and effective principle of necessity as the mother of invention. The following chapter on geography began with the relationship between the sun and the planets, the various aspects of planet earth and its inhabitants distinguished by race. Europe is described as a continent neither rich in resources nor endowed with beautiful and luxuriant scenery; this ancient continent has however been transformed by the courage and intelligent labour of its inhabitants.

The chapter on hygiene concentrated on the growth of the human body and of how to keep it healthy. The fourth chapter opened with a picture of a tractor and explained farming in Italy. This was followed by the various pests and diseases which affect plants and animals. Neither the farming technique nor the series of diseases were relevant in Eritrea during the period of publication. The final chapter was reserved for the moral duties to God, to others and to Italy.

As a first publication, the manual was bulky and of limited usefulness for the student who aspired to learn Italian through the use of the Tigrinya translation text. Firstly it would have required an extraordinary skill to exactly locate the page in the Italian text that matched its Tigrinya translation and secondly, the Tigrinya text would have been of little use since it went beyond literal translation.

The following volume was a quite substantial primer (lettere scelte) selected by the Catholic mission on 1)stories, anecdotes, 2) notions of geography and such places as Italy, Eritrea etc; 3) rights and duties; 4) hygiene; 5) fables, 6) the art of writing letters with examples and finally, 7) poetry.[42] The material was written in simple language and the Tigrinya version was a direct translation of the Italian. In school, the ambitious student could without any assistance find out for himself the Italian expression of what he read in Tigrinya on the opposite page.

The reading material was composed entirely from Italian literature. This was a reading textbook which could easily have accomodated some Eritrean stories, fables, anecdotes and poetry. The text book can be described as the classic colonial teaching aid produced by either secular or religious bodies with little knowledge of the cultural heritage of the inhabitants of the colony and unwilling to concede that the culture of the colonized could be taught in the modern school. The cost of the book (5 lire) was equivalent to half a week's pay for an ordinary worker; this amount, however, could be easily afforded by the salaried traditional elite and by the officers of the native colonial army.

Volume 4 in the series entitled *La colonia Eritrea* (the colony of Eritrea) is essentially a history book.[43] The book opens with a chapter on the geographical aspects of Eritrea and neighbouring countries and ends with a

recapitulation of the census of 1911, followed by a chapter on the political organization of the colony. A brief biography of the current governor is followed by a list with dates of all those who had ruled Eritrea. The chapter concludes with a description of the important offices of the colonial state. The commerce of the colony, the industrial establishment and the agricultural situation are each assigned a chapter. In chapter six the banking system is described and an attempt is made to explain the need for its existence.

Education in the colony is the subject of chapter eight, where most of the space is devoted to the educational system for Italians rather than for Eritreans. This chapter is written in such a biased way that it gives the impression that only the Catholic mission was involved in education. The book concludes with a discussion of the religions professed in the colony. The volume contains a substantial amount of factual material and its scope is exclusively Eritrean. Catholic prejudice against non-Catholics is apparent and it is very easy to imagine the controversy it would have aroused when read by an Ethiopian Orthodox, who is described as a Copt — an appelation which is entirely foreign to the ear of the Eritrean.[44]

The fifth volume was also a reader on Illustrious men of science and charity.[45] Written in the same style as the earlier volumes, the book is divided into twelve chapters on the following: 1) engineers and architects; 2) scientists, 3) painters, sculptors and musicians, 4) industrialists and men of business; 5) men of letters and poets; 6) magistrates and jurists; 7) navigators and explorers; 8) sovereigns and popes; 9) generals; 10) politicians; 11) philanthropists; and 12) missionaries. Without exception the people discussed, (altogether over 60 persons) are Italians, giving the impression to the Eritrean that the world of knowledge was dominated by Italians.

The last volume in the collection, also a reader, is the story of Embae, a young Eritrean, and his experience with his Italian employer.[46] The book was published in 1920 and owing to its contents deserves some detailed description.

Of a poor peasant family, Embae had the opportunity of going to the Catholic mission school. After two years of schooling he moved to the capital and through the assistance of the Catholic mission found a job in an Italian commercial store. Soon after, his employer asked Embae to go with him to Italy on the understanding that the former would eventually assist him to start his own business. As the employer's adopted son Embae moved steadily upwards from being a manager to becoming a shareholder, and finally inherited the property of his employer. In Italy Embae met several leading men of science and he dreamed of writing a book which could guide his countrymen to progress.[47]

As a putatively true story, the book stretches the imagination of the student into the exotic world of Europe. Told by a successful Eritrean, the story

depicts in a symbolic language the relations between the Eritrean, the Catholic mission and the Italian colonialists, where the Eritrean appears to come out the beneficiary. As stated in the preface, the message of the story was to impart to the students that social and economic progress was the result of persistent hard work.

Between 1923 and 1930 the Catholic mission produced two new series of colonial manuals. Written only in Italian these texts appeared to have been planned as teachers' manuals. Designed for grades two to four, the 1923 volume consists of grammar, arithmetic and selected reading material.[48] The grammar and arithmetic contents were based on Italian curricula but had been modified to meet the objectives set by the colonial state. Most of the examples are derived from Eritrean reality and to that extent the manual was a local product for the local school. The reading material was arranged in order to inculcate obedience and respect for Italian rule in Eritrea.

The final volume was published in Italian in 1930 with Tigrinya words and proverbs spread throughout. It was a reader as well as a book of grammar and arithmetic.[49] Every heading was followed by a story or an anecdote taken from the Eritrean situation as perceived by the authors of the Catholic mission.

The purpose of colonial textbooks went beyond teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Through the use of textbooks, the Catholic mission attempted to inculcate certain values, attitudes and perceptions. From an analysis of colonial textbooks, two distinct objectives emerge. These were: a) the position of Italy vis-à-vis Eritrea, and, b) the raison d'être of colonialism.

a) The position of Italy in relation to Eritrea

Italy was portrayed as the fatherland of the Eritreans and the most powerful country in the world. In the textbook of 1912, in the section on duty towards the fatherland, the authors attempted to explain the existence of double patriotisms.[50] A fatherland was defined as a country or place of birth inhabited by a community of people who share a great deal in common. It was also mentioned that the fatherland was worth dying for. Under the same heading Eritrean participation in Italian colonial wars in Somalia and Libya was described as an act of patriotism to the Italian fatherland.

> Our valiant soldiers ... who at Benadir and Tripoli had heroically sacrificed their lives in honour of the fatherland, are notable examples of strong and sincere affection which ought to be rendered to Italy, a country which has granted to these people of Eritrea well-being, liberty, security and peace in civil and religious domains.[51]

In exchange for efficient colonial government, the authors thought they would succeed in inculcating among Eritreans a devotion to Italy as fatherland.

The problem of the Italian relationship to Eritrea was treated more systematically in the text of 1923. The reading section on Italy was preceded by a section on 'My Country' which employed an imaginary argument between two Eritrean students where they accused each other of originating from a more backward part of the colony.[52] The teacher resolves the conflict by pointing out that every country is worthy of respect if inhabited by people who, among other things, respect the integrity of the individual. He then challenged his students saying, 'By the way, you ought all to be satisfied of being subjects of a great country'.[53]

Then the teacher painted a lyrical description of Italy, the most beautiful country in the world:

> There was a period when Italy ruled the world. It was Italy which brought education, the good and saintly manners of life to all other parts of the world. ...Italy has sent to this colony some of her sons to make it fertile, to educate the children of the colonized, to defend the colony from raids and to make it more developed and appreciated.[54]

The awesome stature of Italy and its heritage was highlighted by the juxtaposition of the Eritrean students' perception of their 'country' and a description of Italy in the most glowing terms. Whereas Italy was presented with an ancient and glorious history, Eritrea and the Eritreans emerged into history for the first time with the Italian occupation.

In contrast to the text of 1912, the text of 1923 paid attention to relations between Italy and Eritrea. From the reading section delineated above, two images emerge: on the one hand a backward Eritrea whose destiny lay in the hands of Italy; on the other hand, Italy as the great but selfless power engaged in the civilization of the colony. The contrast between the greatness of Italy and the colony that was condemned to 'centuries of stagnation until the arrival of the Italians' was clear in both the 1912 and 1923 texts.[55]

In the final volume published in 1930, the section on Italy began with a description of how Eritrea had become, since the Italian occupation, a land of labour and richness, free from enemy invasions and secure within its boundaries. Elaborating this theme further, the authors defined a colony as a country occupied by a civilized nation with the aim of civilizing and educating its inhabitants, and then they proceeded to explain the goals of Italian colonialism. The authors wrote that the Italians were doing what the Romans did in ancient times, e.g. spreading education and improving the conditions of the inhabitants.[56] The advantages which Italy brought to Eritrea such as an increase in population, an expansion of commerce and trade, a developed infrastructure and the extension of medical care, were pointed out to illustrate further the altruistic motives of colonialism. This was then followed by an exhortation: 'Learn to salute Italy as a loving and beneficial mother country'.[57]

The beauty and greatness of Italy were repeated in superlative terms which emphasized the goodness, industriousness and bravery of the Italian people.

b) The raison d'être of colonialism

The opening sentence of the first colonial textbook characterized Italian colonialism as a burden carried out for the sake of civilization. To quote:

> In possessing the Abyssinian province which currently carries the name of Eritrea, Italy has no other purpose than to introduce among these people a moral, civil and economic regeneration which are the fruits of modern civilization.[58]

Condemned for centuries to stagnation, Eritrea had in a brief period of time become, due to the intervention of Italy, profitable and civilized.[59] The humanitarian or altruistic motives of colonialism were repeated in the text of 1917, in the reading primers of 1916 and the comprehensive texts of 1923 and 1930. The task of improving agricultural and animal husbandry, and consequently the conditions of life, is repeatedly pointed out in the 1917 volume as the main reason for Italian presence in Eritrea.

The altruistic ease with which the Catholic mission explained Italian colonial presence appeared to limit itself to the changes that were taking place in the Eritrean economy. There was however another reason, namely, the Church's own conception of colonialism. The Catholic Church accepted the legitimate right of Italy to acquire colonies,[60] but it perceived colonial relations in a different perspective from that of the colonial administration. In the context of elementary education, the Catholic Church's perception of colonialism and colonial relations was probably most clearly expressed by the 1920 publication which symbolized the relationship between an Eritrean and an Italian.

Colonial Educational Policy and the Catholic Mission

The Italian state and the colonial government firmly believed firstly in the transformative impact of education on the Eritrean and, secondly, in the possibility of imparting education in a manner that would meet the requirements of the colonial power. The document of 1916 pointed out to district commissioners and mission leaders the impact of education on the native and also conceptualized the attitudes of the colonial state towards education. The close association between education and colonial rule as outlined by the Minister of Colonies vividly emphasized education as an instru-

ment for creating a compliant native population. As most of the teaching was undertaken by the Catholic mission, an insight into the relationship between the state and the Church is of considerable relevance for an assessment of educational policy.

The colonial administration saw the Catholic mission as an institution which pursued its educational activities in an acceptable and appreciated manner.[61] The separation between the Church and the State, which plagued political life in Italy,was virtually non-existent in the colony. As early as the 1890's, the colonial government was aware that Italian missionaries were useful in facilitating the spread of Italian culture and the consolidation of colonial rule.[62]

The Catholic mission was already using its teaching manuals in Eritrea long before colonial experts began theorizing on native education. The aims of the Catholic mission were strikingly similar to those of the colonial experts on the subject. This unity between the colonial administration and the Catholic mission can be illustrated by first outlining the main points of the educational programme of the colonial government and then comparing these points with those put down in the teaching manuals of the Catholic mission.

According to Andrea Festa's writings, which are representative for the latter period, the policy of the colonial state with respect to native education emphasized the following: 1) the greatness of Italy and its civilization; and 2) obedience and gratitude to Italy on the part of the natives. Long before Festa's proclamation of Fascist native educational policy, the Catholic mission had already eulogized the greatness of Italy and its glorious civilization. The reading primer on Illustrious Men (1917), to which many references can be found in the comprehensive manual of 1930, dealt only with famous men of Italy. Italy was depicted not only as great but as the greatest. The theme of Italian greatness also permeated the leading volume on arts and crafts which drew many examples from the ingenuity of Italy.

Concerning the obedience and gratitude which the Eritrean owed Italy, the manuals used sophisticated argumentation. On the one hand, the Catholic mission through its manuals attempted to portray Italy as the motherland of the natives which deserved all obedience and devotion. On the other hand it attempted to rationalize colonial rule on the grounds that conditions had improved because of colonialism and thus the native owed Italy gratitude, devotion and obedience.

Festa's educational programme could hardly have been implemented better than by the Catholic mission's own manuals. If the Superintendent of Schools was not actually paraphrasing the Catholic mission's manuals, his writings on native education were virtually identical to those of the Church.[63] It was hardly coincidental that the colonial administration handed over the running of government schools to the Catholic mission. This can be seen as a reward

to the Church for having carried out its patriotic obligations to the satisfaction of both the colonial government and the Italian state.[64]

The Catholic mission and the Italian state shared the same goals and objectives for native education. However, the Catholic mission diverged from the guidelines of the state on the issue of the training of priests. In the seminary at Keren, the Catholic mission attempted to train Eritrean novices with the same curriculum as in Italy, although the Keren seminary only had the competence to provide a twelve-year academic and religious training.[65] Between 1894 and 1930, the Keren seminary produced 84 priests, an average of slightly over two graduates per year.[66] From 1919 those Eritrean novices who had completed their studies at Keren could pursue their theological studies at the recently re-established Ethiopian College in the Vatican.[67]

The universalistic approach of the Church towards the recruitment and training of clerics, and the autonomy with which the Catholic mission pursued its spiritual activities, contravened the policy pursued by the colonial administration and the Italian state based on the alleged pathological inferiority of the native. For the Catholic mission, the Eritrean was equipped with the same potential as any other person of any other race. For the Italian state and the colonial administration, however, the Eritrean found himself in an 'irreducible pathological inferiority' with respect to the European. While the colonial state implemented a policy of distinct separation of races with all power concentrated in the hands of the colonialists, the Catholic mission, through at least one of its textbooks, preached the policy of assimilation. This was the reader (published 1920) containing the story of the Eritrean youth Embae, who was eventually adopted by his Italian mentor. There was indeed a potential ground for conflict between the racialist attitudes of the colonial administration and the universalistic tendencies of the Catholic Church. However this conflict did not become manifest during the colonial period.

The Organization of the School and Enrolment

Although the education of Eritreans was continued by the Catholic and Swedish missions, under a close surveillance by the colonial administration, it is the schools established and financed by the colonial state that demand our attention, as these all clearly demonstrate the interaction between policy and practice.

In 1911 the colonial government established the first school of arts and crafts for the sons of Muslim chiefs and notables. The school was divided into groups of boarding and day students, each of which followed a different pro-

gramme. While the boarders followed an elementary education in addition to practical crafts such as carpentry and tanning, the external students were trained only in crafts.[68] Five years later, the colonial state established a similar school for Eritrean Catholics at Segeneiti and a school of agriculture for members of the Ethiopian Church.[69]

Apart from setting the limit of education to the first three years of lower education, the design of the curriculum was left to the few lay teachers and missionaries who had been entrusted with running the school for Catholics. The formation of these schools was on the initiative of the colonial governor, and there was hardly any active participation by the Ministry of Colonies. The aim of the Muslim and Catholic schools was to produce clerks, interpreters and skilled workers in crafts and to impart knowledge of modern agricultural practices.[70] The school for the members of the Ethiopian Church was, on the other hand, much narrower in outlook and was only meant to impart a better training in agricultural husbandry.[71]

By 1930 three of the four schools had closed their handicraft section because students were only interested in learning how to read and write. As the schools catered for the children of the nobility and of senior colonial soldiers, the aspirations of such students were geared to clerical jobs rather than to those in the workshop. Furthermore, the students did not want to pursue such crafts as leatherwork and smithery because of 'the radical social prejudice' attached to such crafts by Abyssinian society. These crafts are reserved for the lower and discriminated classes.[72]

With the reorganization of the educational system by the decree of 1921, four schools were now financed by the state with a total number of 260 students, the equivalent of 90 students per school, with an admission rate of 30 students per annum.[73] In explaining the need for educational reorganization, the decree pointed out the necessity of providing a greater flexibility in native education, in recognition of the exigencies of commerce, industry and the colonial administration.[74] Placing the decree in its historical context, with the Martini era as the point of departure (1897—1907), it could be said that the colonial state was responding to the consequences of the educational initiatives which it took in the early 1910's when the first schools were opened.

The schools were divided by the 1921 decree into the following categories: 1) schools of arts and crafts, 2) elementary schools, and, 3) a superior school.[75] Although the colonial state justified the reorganization by the needs of commerce, industry and administration, the pressure exerted by Eritreans for purely elementary education had been considerable. The superior school envisaged by the decree was to provide a two-year programme of consolidation and completion of what had earlier been learned, in addition to new training in calligraphy, typewriting and topography.[76] However, the superior school was not established, and in 1926 its supposed role was superseded by

the establishment of a school in Asmara, which contained both elementary and a two year complementary programme.[77]

The decree of 1921 also limited the duration of elementary education to three years; but the new school established in 1926 invalidated the decree by extending the elementary programme to comprise four years, and thus introduced a number of ambiguities into the educational system. The 'superior school' was not established, although a similar programme was incorporated into the school of 1926. Furthermore the problem of prejudice against training in crafts was left unresolved by the decree of 1921. In order to remedy this ambiguous situation, the colonial state decreed in 1931 that all schools should provide an elementary education of four years duration in addition to an arts and crafts programme.[78] According to the decree of 1931 there were to be schools of arts and crafts as well as purely academic elementary schools.[79]

The questions of the duration of schooling and the extension of elementary education to all types of students were resolved by the decree of 1931. In addition, the decree of 1931 once again allowed for the creation of a middle school providing a two year education, for those who had undergone a purely academic elementary schooling.[80]

As with the superior school whose creation was envisaged in 1921 but never materialized, neither was the middle school, envisaged by the decree of 1931, ever founded. Its establishment was objected to by the Superintendent of Schools on the grounds that the foundation of such a school created false pride among Eritreans, who had now begun to demand the establishment of a similar institution.[81] Thus in spite of the decrees allowing more elementary education, no measures were taken to implement them.

The new administrative reorganization of 1932 recognized the need for further complementary schooling, but it did not wish to designate this programme as 'middle school' education in order to avoid ambitious expectations, as the range of the 'middle school' education for Eritreans was much narrower than its counterpart for Italians.[82] Hence from the beginning of 1933 onwards only a few selected students continued with a two-year programme of completing what they had learned in elementary school.

With the creation of the Italian East African Empire in 1936 [83], the educational system was once again reorganized. The main characteristics of this new decree were that native education was to be limited to three years and that in addition to Italian, local languages were also to be media of instruction.[84] As the first direct legislation from Rome, the decree of 1936 set out the parameters of native education. During the earlier period the involvement of Rome was limited to defining the broad scope and objectives of colonial education. Up to 1936 Italy did not think it necessary to resort to legislation as general policy statements had proved sufficient. The content as well as the duration of native education had been left to the colonial government. How-

ever, when the Italian state intervened, nearly thirty years after the establishment of the first public school, it confirmed the old practice of a three year schooling for natives.

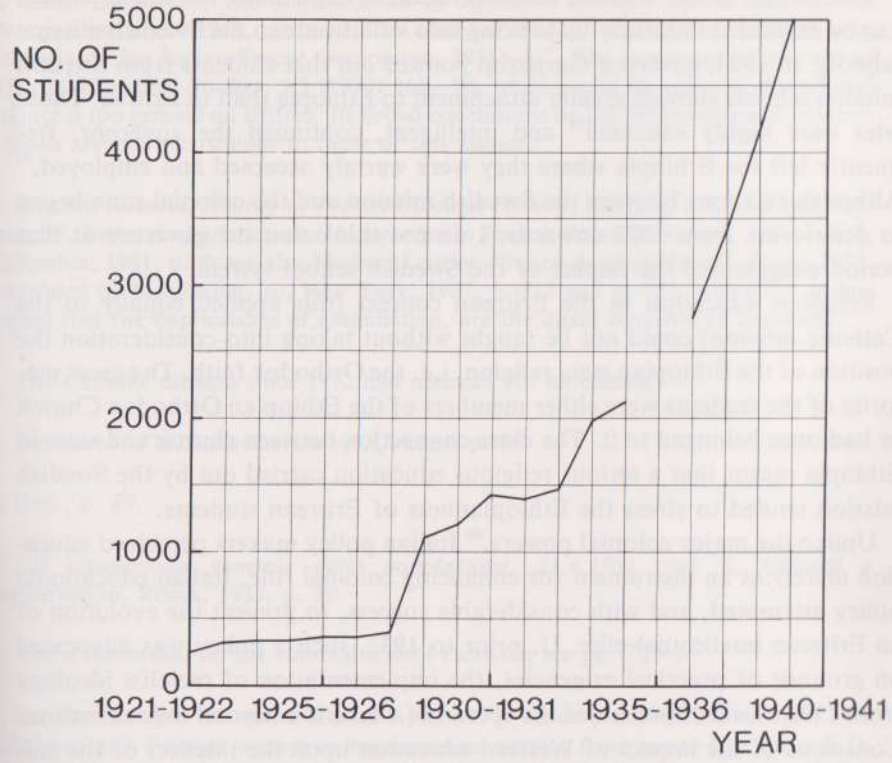
From 1936 onwards the creation of 'Great Eritrea' posed additional problems for the local bureaucracy, namely the opening of new schools in the newly incorporated areas.[85] Although the complementary school systems continued to exist, it appeared that the student intake was extremely small. According to an early post-colonial report, the complementary school had a total number of ten students in 1939.[86]

Enrolment

The enrolment figures prior to the establishment of government schools are rough estimates. The first accurate enrolment census was compiled in 1910 when there were twelve Swedish mission schools with 810 students and seven Catholic mission schools with 350 students.[87] Archival material on enrolment figures is extremely fragmented and when figures are given there is no division between grades and ages.

In the 1916—17 academic year the four government schools had altogether 87 boarding and 71 day students.[88] The model school at Keren had 52 students in its four year programme, which meant that around 15 new students were admitted each year. Five years later, enrolment had increased for all four schools to a total of 260 students, and by 1925, the government schools had a total of 360 students. Enrolment increased dramatically after the establishment of the school at the capital city Asmara in 1926. This is illustrated in the graph below.

Although it is extremely difficult to estimate the size of the educated population, an attempt can nevertheless be made to describe the possible performance of the school system. Assuming that a maximum of 20 per cent of the total number of students in any given year were in their final year of schooling, it is possible to calculate the yearly number of school leavers and thus arrive at an aggregate figure for the approximate size of the educated population. Of 9,962 students enrolled between 1921 and 1934 [89], according to our assumption just under 2,000 had probably completed their education during this period. This figure, based on a rather generous assumption, can be taken as representing the colonial state's role in the education of its colonized subjects. The census returns of 1931 appear to further strengthen the figure of 2,000 as a plausible indicator. According to the census there were 6,181 Eritreans or 1.1% who could read and speak Italian.[90] The colonial school



Graph 3.1. Total Enrolment of Students in Government Schools 1921—22 — 1939—40.

remained an elitist institution accessible at the most to 2 per cent of the school age population.[91]

Concluding Remarks

Sources on the relationship between education and colonial rule are extremely fragmentary for the earlier period and highly polemical for the latter period, i.e. 1932—41. According to the superintendent of Eritrean schools, Andrea Festa, the colonial school had fulfilled its function in the production of the 'future soldiers of Italy'. The colonial school system was reviewed in 1918[92] and by Andrea Festa himself from 1934 onwards. The conclusion that I draw from such reports is that the colonial administration succeeded in controlling the quality and intake of entrants. Neither in the published literature nor in the archives do we find that the government school system produced results which complicated colonial rule.

The success of the colonial administration in controlling the school system can be explained indirectly by looking into its attitude to the Swedish mission schools. In 1924, governor Gasparini pointed out that students from Swedish mission schools showed greater attachment to Ethiopia than to Eritrea. Those who were highly educated[93] and intelligent, continued the governor, frequently left for Ethiopia where they were warmly accepted and employed.[94] Although relations between the Swedish mission and the colonial state began to deteriorate from 1925 onwards, I do not think that the governor at that period exaggerated the impact of the Swedish school system.

Religious education in the Eritrean context (this applied equally to the Catholic mission) could not be taught without taking into consideration the position of the Ethiopian state religion, i.e. the Orthodox faith. The great majority of the students were either members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church or had once belonged to it. The close connection between church and state in Ethiopia meant that a serious religious education carried out by the Swedish mission tended to stress the Ethiopianness of Eritrean students.

Unlike the major colonial powers,[95] Italian policy makers perceived education merely as an instrument for enhancing colonial rule. Italian educational policy attempted, and with considerable success, to prevent the evolution of an Eritrean intellectual elite. If, prior to 1932, such a policy was advocated on grounds of practical exigencies, the implementation of racialist ideology from 1932 onwards precluded the spread of education beyond indoctrination. Conscious of the impact of Western education upon the intellect of the colonized, the colonial administration adopted a policy of limiting education to lower elementary, thus ensuring that its colonial rule would not be challenged through its own language.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Catholic missionaries and the Swedish Evangelical mission had schools in Eritrea long before the Italian occupation of Eritrea. For the history of missionary educational activites see Donald Crummey, *Priests and Politicians: Protestant and Catholic missions in Orthodox Ethiopia, 1830—1868*, Oxford, 1972; Richard Pankhurst, 'The Foundations of Education, Printing, Newspapers, Book Production, Libraries and Literacy in Ethiopia', *Ethiopia Observer*, 6:3 (1962) 241—90; Gustav Arén, Evangelical *Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus*, Stockholm, 1978. While the Catholic mission by the beginning of 1932, had dominated native education, the Swedish Evangelical mission continued to run its schools in spite of considerable obstruction from the colonial state, until the expulsion of Swedish missionaries and the confiscation of their schools in 1936. See Viveca Halldin-Norberg, *Swedes in Haile Selassie's Ethiopia, 1924—1952*, Uppsala, 1977, p. 74; Trevaskis, G. K. N., *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition, 1941—52*, Oxford, 1960, p. 33.

2. Renzo De Marco, *The Italianization of Africans: Italian Colonial Educational Policy*, New York, 1943, pp. 7—8. The study of Richard Pankhurst, 'Education in Ethiopia during Italian Fascist Occupation, 1936—41', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 5:3 (1972) 361—96, while useful on colonial educational politics is too general on Eritrea. Its broad conclusions on the performance of colonial schools are however similar to those of this author.

3. Stephen Roberts, *History of French Colonial History*, London, vol. 1, p. 68; Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial History, 1890—1914*, Columbia, 1961, p. 8; see also Herbert Leuthy, *France Against Herself*, Paris, 1955, translated by Mosbacher, E., New York, 1957, p. 211 and p. 237, where the author argues that the implications of assimilation, are the direct opposite of apartheid.

4. The Catholic mission since 1912 had manuals for all classes.

5. De Marco, *The Italianization of Africans*, p. 85.

6. Ibid., p. 89.

7. *VII Censimento generale della popolazione, 21.4.1931, vol. 5, Colonie e Possedimenti*, Roma, 1935, p. 39.

8. For a discussion on the colonial school curricula see pp. 72—77.

9. See for example the racial law of April 1937, which punished Italian men who cohabited with Eritrean women to imprisonment ranging from one to five years. R.D. of 19.4.1937, no. 880. The legal separation of races was further expanded by the law of 26.6.1939, no. 1004.

10. By far the most relevant studies are those by Mininni M. Caracciolo, 'Le scuole nelle colonie italiane di diretto dominio''', *Rivista di Pedagogica*, 23:3—5 (1930) 183—207, and 273—98; Rodolfo Micacchi, 'L'insegnamento agli indigeni nelle colonie italiane di diretto domonio', *Atti del Secondo Congresso di Studi Coloniali*, Firenze, 1931, (published 1934) vol. 4, pp. 226— 56. The study by Enrico De Leone, 'Politica indigena e scuola', *Rivista Italiana*, 1937, no. 231, pp. 3—15, dealt with the need for a thorough reorganization of the educational system. Opposed to the concept of assimilation (p. 3), the author argued the possibilities of controlling education of natives in order to meet the requirements of native society and the interests of the colonizing power. Since his reform programme called for an expertise that had yet to be created, it was unlikely that his article had concrete impact on colonial praxis.

11. The office was occupied by Andrea Festa, a veteran colonial officer with long experience in Libya. Festa wrote about the total number of enrolled students but hardly bothered to provide important details such as how many were in each year.

12. Ferdinando Martini, *Il diario eritreo*, vol. 2, p. 472, for 27.5.1901.

13. ACS, Carte Martini, busta 4, Martini to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asmara, 26.4.1901. See also Renato Paoli, Nella colonia Eritrea, Milano, 1908, p. 96.

14. Colonia Eritrea: *Istruzione Pubblica*, Asmara, 1914, p. 9, containing the government decree on the establishment of the school.

15. ASMAI vol. 3, pacco 37, busta 4, Commissariato di Cheren to Asmara, 12.7.1918: Scuola d'arti e mestieri in Cheren. Pregi diffetti e proposte, p. 2.

16. In 1914 two more schools were opened for Christians and Muslims respectively. Colonia Eritrea, *Istruzione Pubblica*, Asmara, 1914, p. 34.

17. Ibid., for a programme of study followed at the school at Addi Wegri, pp. 34—49. The students were obliged to wear uniforms similar to those of the colonial soldiers. Military instruction in theory as well as in practice was provided for throughout the four year programme.

18. ASMAI pos. 31/1, file 10, 5.7.1910, Di San Giuliano to Salvago-Raggi.

19. AE 402 Circolare: Pubblica Istruzione, Cheren, 31.12.1916. The document was four unmubered pages long.

20. Ibid., p. 3.

21. Ibid., p. 4.

22. Quoted in Micacchi, 'L'insegnamento agli indigeni', pp. 7—8; See also De Marco, *The Italianization of Africans*, p. 19.

23. As director of education in the Ministry of Colonies throughout the fascist period, Micacchi ought to have played a decisive role in the reorganization of the Libyan educational system. With the reform of 1927, it was envisaged that firstly, Libyans would have access to only three years of elementary schooling and secondly, that school would be an effective instrument for developing respect and devotion to Italy. In the case of Eritrea, there was no need for reforms along the ministerial guidelines since the educational system was still rudimentary. See p. 227.

24. Caracciolo, 'Le scuole nelle colonie italiane', p. 186.

25. Ibid., p. 187.

26. Ibid..

27. Andrea Festa, 'Le istituzioni educative in Eritrea', *Atti del secondo congresso di studi coloniali*, 1934, Firenze, 1935, vol. 2, p. 294. The same views were expressed virtually verbatim in his later writings: 'Presupposti e fine dell'azione educative in Eritrea', *Atti del terzo congresso di studi coloniali*, 1937, Firenze, vol. 6, 1937, p. 128; 'L'istruzione per i bianchi e per indigeni', *Etiopia*, 2:4 (1938), p. 55.

28. Festa, 'Le istituzioni educative', 1934, p. 294.

29. Ibid..

30. Lidio Cipriani, *Considerazione sopra il passato e l'avvenire delle popolazione africane*, Firenze, 1932, pp. 17, 20, 111—14.

31. Ibid., and idem., 'Razze africane e civiltá dell'Europa', in *Reale Accademia d'Italia, Convegno di scienze morali e storiche, tema: Africa*, 2 vols., 1938 (Roma, 1939) vol. 1, p. 598.

32. Ibid., p. 599.

33. Maurizio Rava, 'Politica sociale verso gli indigeni e modi di collaborazione con essi', *Accademia d'Italia, Convegno: tema Africa*, vol. 1, p. 771.

34. Giuseppe Bottai, 'La scuola Fascista nell'Africa Italiana', *Etiopia*, 3:3 (1939), p. 3.

35. For the early history of Swedish mission schools wee Iwarsson, J. and Tron, A., *Notizie storiche e varie sulla missione evangelica svedese dell'Eritrea, 1866—1916*, Asmara, 1918.

36. Festa, 'Le istituzioni educative', 1934, p. 289.

37. Metodio Da Nembro, *La missione dei minori cappuccini in Eritrea, 1894—1952*, Roma, 1953, p. 74. The Swedish mission schools, however continued to function until 1932.

38. Festa, 'Le istituzioni educative', 1934, p. 289.

39. Festa, 'Una fucina di pre-ascari', *I Diritti della scuola*, 34 (1937) p. 541. The military organization of native youth was carried out through the direction of the central office for primary schools in cooperation with the Fascist party. Training took place in the schools and students constituted the majority of the trainees. Military training was part of the curriculum in Eritrean schools prior to the advent of Fascism, AE 531, 'Regolamento per la scuola di arti e mestieri', Keren, 1.7.1923. See also, Colonia Eritrea: Istruzione Pubblica, Asmara, 1914, pp. 34—49.

40. The first colonial manual, by Fluvio Contini, *Libro della II classe*, Firenze, 1931, was followed by the second volume, Contini, F., *Libro della III classe*, in the same year. Both were published by the Ministry of Colonies, and were reading primers in Italian for Libyan students. In Eritrea, the Catholic mission since 1912 had manuals covering all courses and classes. Furthermore, the colonial state since 1923 had handed over the running of the government colonial schools to the Catholic mission. Hence De Marco's claim (p. 58) that Italian teachers in Eritrea attempted to use Libyan manuals appeared to have been based on an incorrect assumption that there were no colonial manuals in Eritrea.

In 1937, the Libyan manuals were republished together with a third volume, *Libro Sussidiario per la terza classe elementare per indigeni*, Firenze, 1937, intended for use in the newly established empire. Unlike the Eritrean manuals, these were published in Florence making them less accessible and more expensive. Although some copies arrived in Addis Abeba, the capital of the empire, they may not have been distributed

at all. For a brief review of these textbooks see Richard Pankhurst, 'The Textbooks of Italian Colonial Africa', *Ethiopia Observer*, 12:4 (1967) 327—32.

41. Missione Cattolica, *Manuale di Istruzione ad uso degli indigeni*, Asmara, 1912. Italian text, pp. 1—130, Tigrinya text, pp. 131—403.

42. Missione Cattolica, *Manuale di letture scelte italiane — tigrai ad uso delle scuole indigene*, Asmara, 1916, p. 455.

43. Ibid., *La colonia Eritrea, Manuale d'Istruzione Italiano-Tigrai ad uso delle scuole indigene*, Asmara, 1917, p. 215.

44. Ibid. pp. 196—97.

45. Missione Cattolica, *Uomini Illustri del lavoro, della scienza e della carità, Libro di lettura Italiano-Tigrai ad uso delle scuole indigene*, Asmara, 1917, p. 263.

46. Ibid., *Embae ... (Vittorio del lavoro): Libro di lettura Italiano-Tigrai ad uso delle scuole indigene*, Asmara, 1920, p. 215.

47. Ibid., p. 115.

48. Missione Cattolica, *Libro per le scuole elementare indigene, classe II*, Asmara, 1923, p. 131.

49. Missione Cattolica, *Libro per le scuole elementare indigene, classe III*, Asmara, 1930, p. 279.

50. Missione Cattolica, *Manuale di Istruzione*, 1912, Italian text p. 105, Tigrinya text, p. 225.

51. Ibid..

52. Missione Cattolica, *Libro per le scuole elementare indigene*, 1923, p. 48—51.

53. Ibid., p. 50.

54. Ibid., p. 51.

55. Missione Cattolica, *Libro per le scuole*, 1912, p. VI.

56. Ibid., *Libro per le scuole*, 1930, p. 35, p. 261.

57. Ibid., p. 35.

58. Ibid., *Libro per le scuole*, 1912, p. VII.

59. Ibid..

60. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini, Il Duce: Gli anni del consenso*, Milano, 1974, p. 264; for a collection of studies on Justice and Colonial expansion published by the Vatican, La Civiltà Cattolica, see Messineo, A., Giustizia ed espansione coloniale, Roma, 1937.

61. The Catholic mission consisted of the Cappuccini Fathers established in Eritrea in 1894, the Daughters of St. Anna established in 1878 and the Sisters of Pia della Nigritzia established in 1910. According to Metodio Da Nembro, *La missione dei minori cappuccini in Eritrea, 1894—1952*, Roma, 1953, p. 74, by 1923 all three public schools had been handed over to the Catholic mission, a strong indication that the colonial state was satisfied with the performance of the former.

62. Prior to Italian colonization the French Lazzarists were active in Eritrea. Suspected of disloyalty to the colonial state on the grounds of their nationality, the colonial state asked the Vatican for their replacement by an Italian order whose patriotism and role in the spread of Italian culture could be taken for granted. ASMAI pos. 33/1, file 8, governor Baratieri to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12.9.1894; ASMAI pos. 33/2, file 6, Foreign Minister Blanc to governor Baratieri, 21.1.1895. See also Cesare M. Bounaiuti, *Politica e religioni nel colonialismo italiano, 1882—1941*, Varese, 1982, pp. 61—62 on the secret negotiations between the Italian state and the Vatican concerning the replacement of the French Lazzarists. 'With our schools' wrote father Ezechia da Isseo in 1922, 'we propagate our language and with the language, Italian thought, art, science and civilization', in *I Cappuccini in Eritrea: Dieci anni di apostolato*, Asmara, 1922, pp. 31—32.

63. Festa, 'Presupposti e fine dell'azione educative', 1937, p. 128.

64. Ibid., 'Le istituzioni educative in Eritrea', p. 289.

65. Metodio Da Nembro, 'Genesi e sviluppo del clero nativo etiopico fino all'accostituzione della gerarchia', *Euntes Docete: Commentaria Urbaniana*, Il Vaticano, 1953, p. 308.

66. Da Nembro, *La missione dei minori cappuccini*, p. 319.

67. Ibid., 'Genesi e sviluppo del clero nativo', p. 309. By 1940, there were forty Eritreans studying in the Ethiopian College at the Vatican. ACS-MAI busta 15, 20.12.1940.

68. ASMAI vol. 3, pacco 37, busta 4, Commissariato regionale di Cheren to Asmara, 10.11.1910, a report on schools.

69. Ibid., PM 'scuole ed ordinamento scolastico in Eritrea', n.d. but not later than 1931.

70. Ibid., in footnote 68 above.

71. The governmental decree of 12.9.1921 no. 3808 stated the school should provide elementary education in addition to courses on agriculture.

72. ASMAI vol. 3, pacco 37, busta 4, PM 'scuole ed ordinamento scolastico', written not later than 1931.

73. Angelo Piccioli, *La nuova Italia d'oltremare*, vol. 2, Milano, 2nd. ed., 1934, p. 1149.

74. The governmental decree of 8.4.1931, no. 5226.

75. D. G., no. 3809, 12.9.1921, on the reorganization of the educational system, article 1.

76. Ibid., article 4.

77. ASMAI vol. 3, pacco 37, busta 4, PM 'scuole ed ordinamento scolastico'.

78. Ibid., PM 'Colonia Eritrea', n.d. but of end of 1933; D. G. of 8.4.1931.

79. Piccioli, *La nuova Italia d'oltremare*, vol. 2, p. 1152.

80. ASMAI vol. 3, pacco 37, busta 4, PM 'Scuole ed ordinamento scolastico'.

81. Ibid..

82. The aim of the complementary school was, according to Festa to complete what was learned in the earlier years.

83. In May 1936 the Italo-Ethiopian war came to an end with the establishment of an East African Empire, where Eritrea was reconstituted to include a large part of northern Ethiopia. Pre-1936 Eritrea was referred to as 'Old' or 'Historic', while post-1936 Eritrea was described as 'New' or 'Great' Eritrea.

84. R.D. of 13.6.1936, no. 136, Ordinamento e amministrazione dell'Africa Orientale Italiana, article 31.

85. ASMAI vol. 3, pacco 37, busta 4, Festa, A., 'scuole elmentari dell'Eritrea, 1936—37. Of twenty five newly opened schools, thirteen were located in the newly incorporated part of Eritrea.

86. FO 371/69370, Four Power Commission Report on Eritrea, 1948, Chapter Six: The Administration and judicial system, p. 70.

87. Gaspare Colosimo, *Relazione al parlamento sulla situazione politica ed amministativa delle colonie italiane*, 1918, pp. 375—76. The Swedish Evangelical mission in Eritrea had by 1916 a total of 1,250 students of which about a third were females. Boys' schools were organized into four years of primary education followed by a three year post-primary programme. For girls, education lasted three years and was designed to make good housewives out of them. According to Piccioli, *La Nouva Italia*, vol. 2, p. 1149, the number of students in the Swedish mission schools fell from 1,400 in 1922 to only 300 in 1932 at the time when Swedish mission schools were closed down. One of the reasons why enrolment declined was the opening of the Vittorio Emanuelle School in Asmara in 1926.

88. Colosimo, *Relazione sulla situazione politica*, p. 376; See also De Marco, *The Italianization of Africans*, p. 49.

89. To these ought to be added the students from the Swedish and the Catholic mission.

90. *VII Censimento generale*, 1931, p. 39.

91. The approximate figure of 2% is based on the assumption that the school age population constitute c. 20% of the population. According to the census of 1939 the population of Great Eritrea amounted to 1,537,213 (Vittorio Castellano, 'Il censimento del 1939', pp. 270—71). Thus of a school age population of over 300,000, the total enrolment of c. 5,000 amounted to c. 1,7 per cent of the school age children and much less than 1 per cent of the total population.

92. ASMAI, vol. 3, pacco 37, busta 4, Scuola d'arti e mestieri in Cheren: Pregi — difetti — proposte, Cheren, 12.7.1918. Reviewing the performance of the school from its establishment in 1909, the district governor reported that the school was no longer engaged in arts and crafts but mainly in literary subjects. He warned that the educated natives, respected by the population, would want to consider themselves as equal to their Italian masters. He suggested the abolition of literary subjects and concentration on arts and crafts. His warning was accepted, as the Decree of 1921, declared that the school at Keren was only to concentrate on arts and crafts.

93. The Swedish mission school had a six year programme. The first three years were devoted to elementary schooling. The remaining years were devoted to religious studies. See Iwarson and Tron, *Notizie storiche e varie sulla missione evangelica*, p. 26.

94. ASMAE, AA.PP. 1025/3038, Governor Gasparini to MC, 23.6.1924.

95. See for example for British educational policy in Ghana, Kay, G.B., *The Political Economy of Colonialism: A Collection of Documents and Statistics*, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 278—304; Vischer, H., 'Native Education in British Tropical Africa', R. Accademia d'Italia, *Convegno: tema Africa*, Roma, 1938, pp. 949—69; Ogunlande, O.F., 'Education and Politics in Colonial Nigeria: The case of King's College, Lagos, 1906—1911', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 7:2 (1974) 325—43; Gifford, P. and Weiskel, T., 'African Education in a colonial context', in *Britain and France in Africa*, edited by Gifford, P. and Louis, Wm. R., New Haven, 1971, pp. 663—711.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IDEOLOGY OF COLONIALISM: NATIVE POLICY

Introduction

Colonial native policies have been examined from the perspective of the colonized and how much latitude they had in managing their own affairs and their lives.[1] The difference in the ideological basis of native policy can be clearly distinguished between one colonial system and another, notwithstanding the wide variations in practice between colonies and within regions of the same colony.

The aim of this chapter is to answer two principal questions. Firstly, to what extent could the Eritrean participate in managing his affairs and providing for his future? Secondly, to what extent did native policy provide the means and opportunities for the Eritrean to oppose or challenge the colonial system? As the answers to both questions can only be appreciated within a comparative context, this chapter starts with a brief discussion of British and French native policies.[2] It is then followed by an empirical discussion of the political and administrative aspects of Italian native policy.

The Basis of British and French Native Policies

British colonialism in Africa was closely associated with the so-called system of indirect rule. On the basis of indirect rule, native chiefs were regarded as an integral part of the machinery of government, with well defined powers and functions recognized by government and law, and not dependent upon the caprice of executive officers. First developed in Africa by Lord Lugard, Governor of Nigeria between 1900 and 1906, its ideological as well as its practical basis was established with the publication, in 1922, of Lord Lugard's The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa.

Explaining the motives for colonialism in general and the appropriate system of colonial rule in particular, Lord Lugard wrote:

> Let it be admitted at the outset that European brains, capital and energy have not been, and never will be, expended in developing the resources of Africa, from motives of pure philanthropy; that Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and the native races in their progress to a higher plane; that the benefit can be made reciprocal, and that it is the aim and desire of civilized administration to fulfill this dual mandate.[3]

Between 1906 and 1938, British colonial policy hinged around the problems of defining and implementing the system of indirect rule in Africa. A strong factor in favour of the system was that it was far less expensive to implement. This can be illustrated by the fact that in 1931 there were only 431 British officers administering Nigeria with its population of eighteen million.[4]

As a product of a period permeated with growing racism, the system of indirect rule had a well-discernible ideological base. Indirect rule was advocated on the grounds that the unique qualities of British political life and its institutions could not be transferred successfully to other people. Hence indirect rule, as expounded by Lord Lugard, in addition to its suitability on budgetary grounds, was based on the firm belief that Africans would never evolve institutions similar to those of Europe.[5] Indirect rule as a system held fast with some minor changes in spite of a series of critique.

Critical voices against indirect rule were raised from its inception until its final revocation in 1947. Its critics exploited successfully the structural weaknesses of the system and its ideological assumptions which were being proved wrong by the unfolding process of colonialism. One of the persistent criticisms emphasized that indirect rule had created a feudal system which was inefficient, expensive and corrupt.[6] Indirect rule, its critics continued, had the effect of submerging democratic elements in tribal societies under an authoritarian and anachronistic framework. It was a vehicle of reaction rather than of progress. The position of the critics was strengthened by the slow but steady growth of literate Africans and urban citizens who found life under a tribal regime stifling, oppressive and undemocratic.[7] By the late 1930's when Lord Hailey conducted his monumental African Survey, the structural problems of indirect rule had become all too apparent. Pointing out the problems of integrating the system of indirect rule with that of parliamentary institutions, Lord Hailey called for a programme of rapid social and economic development to be accompanied by a growth of political involvement and responsibility among the Africans themselves.[8]

Lord Hailey's Survey described the tensions and the strains of indirect rule at a period when a significant number of literate Africans were pushed aside to make way for the traditional elite. While the implementation of indirect rule denied any meaningful role to the African literati, no mechanisms were developed to hinder an increasing number of Africans from acquiring western education. Indirect rule could only survive and thrive in areas where either

western education had not quite spread or through a strict implementation of a system of apartheid where the colonized were deliberately kept away from western education.

The limitations of indirect rule, which became increasingly apparent from the mid 1930's onwards, were brought about by the contradictory colonial policies on education on the one hand, and by the persistent demands of African townsmen for a system based on other premises than tribalism.[9] Although it was clearly understood from the outset that an educated elite was dangerous for the maintenance of political stability and although attempts were made to produce an educational programme aimed at achieving a stable and compliant population, the praxis of colonial education resulted in the production of African elites which posed challenges to the colonial system. The number of schools, enrolment and the type of education offered, varied from colony to colony. However, by mid the 1920's the foundations for higher learning were laid down in West and East African British colonies.[10]

Throughout the colonial period the British, strictly pursuing the prescriptions of indirect rule, expected and maintained that educated Africans seek their careers in their tribal institutions and concern themselves exclusively with local matters while the British colonial officers took care of the rest.

The attempts to streamline political and social change through African native institutions ran counter to the changes which were brought about by the colonial economic system and by the institutions engaged in the spread of education, namely the churches and the colonial administration. Through indirect rule colonial policy aimed at a gradual, slow and evolutionary change where the future was perceived as unproblematic. Through the slow but steady spread of western education, however, colonialism created an elite which demanded active participation and an eventual transfer of power.[11]

By the late 1930's, indirect rule had outlived its usefulness. Lord Hailey attempted to revive it by pruning its bad parts. His plan was cut short by the new reality of the aftermath of the Second World War.[12]

By contrast, French native policy passed through three identifiable phases, namely those of 1) assimilation, 2) association, and 3) a phase where both assimilation and association were simultaneously implemented.[13] The policy of assimilation, in so far as it referred to the relations between the colonized and the colonizer presupposed the possibility and even the desirability of assimilating culturally inferior subjects into the superior French culture.[14] Developed during the second half of the eighteenth century, the policy of assimilation was widely practiced in France's West Indian colonies.[15] In the African continent, the main example of French assimilationist native policy were the four communes in Senegal (total population 22,000 in 1936) whose citizens enjoyed full citizenship and electoral rights.[16] Assimilation remained France's colonial policy until the 1880's.

Commenting on the ideological basis of the policy of assimilation, Leuthy wrote in the mid 1950's that the power to assimilate went hand in hand with a capacity to be assimilated and that both depended on self-confidence and awareness of the possession of an intellectual superiority.[17]

From the 1880's onwards, the policy of assimilation gave way to the policy commonly referred to as 'association', described by Hubert Deschamps, a former colonial officer of the higher echelon, as Lugardism in disguise.[18] The policy of assimilation was rejected because it was feared that the elevation of millions of colonized people to the status of citizenship would be detrimental to the interests of France.[19] Whereas the policy of assimilation called for the extension of rights and duties from the metropole to the colonies, the dominant colonial policy from the 1880's perceived colonialism more in terms of the domination of superior races over inferior ones. Racialist arguments were used to strengthen the arguments against assimilation.[20] The policy of 'association', as interpreted by Hubert Deschamps, called for a minimum of interference with African indigenous institutions since such a policy was cheap to administer. Moreover, this policy made the introduction of a system of economic and political control possible in the colonies which would have been declared illegal under an assimilationist colonial policy.[21]

The third type of native policy emerged in the beginning of the 1930's with a discernible emphasis on assimilation.[22] Writing on French native policies during this period, Professor Lucy Mair wrote that:

> The assumption which governs the whole attitude of France towards native development is that French civilization is necessarily the best and need only be presented to the intelligent African for him to adopt it. Once he has done so, no avenue of advancement is to be closed to him. If he proves himself capable of assimilating French education, he may enter any profession, may rise to the dignity of Under Secretary for colonies, and will be received as an equal by French society[23]

The native policy of the 1930's was, however, more of a hybrid policy rather than a well articulated policy of assimilation.[24] Schools were far too few, the great majority of students rarely went beyond the primary level, and the policy of association continued to function with some modifications.[25]

The salient feature of both the British and French native policies was that of paternalism. In the African context paternalism may be defined as the exercise of power over a colonized people through regulations designed eventually to assist the colonized into parity with the paternalist power.[26] Implicit to the paternalist mentality was the conviction of cultural superiority of the colonizing power, and the subsequent conviction that the colonial power possessed not only the might but also the right to speak for those whose tutelage it has the duty to protect.[27] The pursuance of paternalism, as the declared objective, neither contradicted nor hampered economic reorganization and ex-

ploitation of the world of the colonized. With only modest assistance from the colonial government, economic firms of the colonial power could and did establish themselves as paternalists in the economic sphere, thus exercising control over colonial forces of production. Forced labour, onerous cash taxation and inelastic price mechanisms were imposed and implemented within the framework of the paternalist objective of colonialism.[28]

In both the British and the French native policy, the elite of the colonized population had some leeway to enter into a dialogue with the colonizing states on the nature of colonialism. In British Tropical Africa, the emergence of an independent press and the formation of pressure groups were allowed, if not always encouraged.[29] In French African colonies, the Black Frenchmen functioned as the critics of the abuses of colonialism.[30]

Italian Native Policy and Practice in Eritrea

State of research

Although secondary studies of Italian native policies hardly exist, numerous researchers have made brief comments on this aspect of colonialism.[31] For E.A. Scaglione, a biographer of Governor Aosta, Italy pursued a policy, during the 1937—40 period, that was very similar to that of apartheid.[32] According to Scaglione's interpretation, the East African empire was to be divided into three geographical zones. In the first zone, entirely inhabited by Italian colonists, autonomous politico-administrative structures were to be developed. The colonial state would be obsolete as it was envisaged that the first zone would become the home of an Italian community, planted in African soil. The second zone was a much wider area, and where the main economic activities were to be controlled by Italian agro-industry. The natives were not to be pushed out completely as they were required to provide labour for Italian capital. The last zone was presumably to comprise all the areas that were of least economic interest to Italy. This third zone was to be at the disposition of the natives. The colonial state was to function as a mediator between the first and the other two zones.[33]

On the basis of the laws which made inter-racial cohabitation punishable, Angelo Del Boca, has argued that Italy pursued policies that were similar to the system of apartheid as practiced today in the Republic of South Africa.[34] For Professor Denis Mack Smith, a British scholar of Italian history, 'the most notable contribution of Fascist Italy to colonialism was the theory and practice of apartheid'.[35] Similar views have also been expressed by Professor

Sergio Romano in his concluding comments on the Italian invasion of Libya.[36]

In his anthology on Italian Imperialism, Professor Aldo Mola concurred with the summation of Denis Mack Smith that Italy pursued a policy of apartheid in Africa.[37] Explaining the class basis of Italian colonial racism, Professor Mola emphasized that it did not help to qualify the 'apartheid' nature of Italian native policy by presenting numerous cases of commercial sexual contacts between Italian colonizers and their Eritrean 'madames' which permeate colonial chronicles. The purposes of racial laws and the basis of Italian racism according to Mola were not only to create a barrier against the consequences of inter-racial sexual contacts but to reaffirm in a very drastic manner the immutability of the relations between the colonizer and the colonized.[38] However, for professor Alberto Sbacchi, the author of the most substantial study on Italian colonialism in Ethiopia, 1936—40, colonial policies are discussed as conglomerations of isolated episodes rather than as a well-defined and coherent system of relations between the colonizer and the colonized.[39]

Italian native policy passed through three phases. The first phase, which I have designated as the Martini period, 1897—1908, was characterized by the close relationship between race and class. The second phase, conceptualized as the period of rational imperialism extended from 1908 until 1932, where native policy was predominantly paternalist. The third phase, which lasted until the demise of colonialism, was marked by the assertion of an indisputable dominance over the colonized. As I shall argue in the conclusion, whereas Italian native policy moved towards apartheid and the perpetual domination of its African colonies, that of Britain was undergoing structural changes caused by the emergence of an articulate educated elite. In French colonies, assimilation had decidedly substituted the policy of association.

The Martini Period, 1897—1907

Ferdinando Martini, the man rightly credited with the consolidation of colonial rule in Eritrea, epitomized the position of the Eritrean in the new colonial system when he wrote that the main motive for colonialism was not to civilize the native but to substitute him with the Italian.[40] Martini's counter-rhetoric written in 1891, soon after his visit to Eritrea as a member of a parliamentary commission, thus based on first hand experience of the colony cannot, nevertheless, be elevated to the level of native policy. In those early years there existed sharply contrasting views as to what to make out of colonies.

The position of the Eritrean became an actual problem in 1890 with the

creation of Eritrea. According to the policy of Prime Minister Crispi, Eritrea was destined to be a colony of settlement. In this new framework, the presence of the Eritrean was taken as unproblematic,[41] where the overriding colonial interest of the period was the acquisition of a colony for colonist settlement. Bearing in mind that the Italians occupied the Eritrean highlands without meeting any resistance, the summary executions of up to one thousand people on the grounds that they might resist colonial rule, explained a great deal the position to which the Eritrean was to be assigned.[42] According to Franchetti and the colonial military regime, the Eritrean was a person with a good deal of obligations towards the colonial system but without any corresponding rights over his life and property. The Eritrean was perceived as an entirely disposable being, hence without any defined place in the colonial system.

In Eritrea, the above colonial perceptions and policies were challenged through the armed rebellion towards the end of 1894, a rebellion which initiated the Ethio-Italian conflict of 1895—96 culminating in the famous battle of Adwa. The Adwa experience called for an assessment of colonial policies including the perceptions of the colonized.

One of the most immediate consequences of the change of policy was that the colonial military regime saw no reason to introduce any enclosure system over the expropriated lands until such time that Italian colonists with capital arrived in Eritrea and demanded suitable land for settlement. To the extent that effective expropriation of land remained a hypothetical possibility, the colonial administration had no reason to resent the presence of the Eritrean in the colony. The realization of the problems around the settlement of landless colonists and the subsequent change of colonial policy were to form the basis for a new colonial and native policy.

According to the terms of reference the newly appointed governor of Eritrea, Ferdinando Martini, was instructed to withdraw from Eritrea if he found it difficult to run the colony with a budget of six million lire per annum.[43] Conscious of the constraints, Martini's overriding concern remained the maintenance of colonial rule in Eritrea. He was acutely aware that in order to prolong Italian colonialism in Eritrea he had to diffuse local resistance and establish a peaceful coexistence with Ethiopia. In practice this meant that the Eritrean pre-capitalist political, economic and social structures were not only to be left undisturbed but that their preservation was to be strictly adhered to by the colonial state.

Martini was compelled to introduce a system of colonial rule whereby the Eritrean traditional political elite was employed to rule on behalf of the colonial state. This was unsatisfactory but inevitable. Ideally he would have preferred a more direct rule where the colonizer would exercise absolute domination over the Eritrean. One typical instance can be cited.

In April 1901, governor Martini learned that a Swedish missionary had

married an Eritrean. Lamenting the fact that he would have stopped the marriage had he known well ahead in time, Martini wrote:

> It is absolutely necessary for the government to affirm in an open manner the superiority of the white race over the black. ... The prohibition of maritial union ought to constitute an insurmountable barrier necessary for the protection and maintenance of the prestige of our race. But the Swedish mission has demonstrated its lack of sentiment of such prestige.[44]

Martini's racist outbursts over a marriage between an Eritrean and a Swedish missionary, albeit a minor and individual incident, explains the position which he wished the Eritrean to assume.[45] The way to keep the colonies, Martini quite correctly noted, was not only through the Army but through the maintenance of an European prestige vis-à-vis the native.[46]

He despised the form of irregular union between an Italian man and an Eritrean woman known as 'madamissmo' on the pragmatic grounds that such intimacy between the rulers and the colonized weakened the capability of the colonial state to perpetuate its hegemonic position through prestige. In other words, intimacy exposed the member of the colonial power at his weakest. Martini's outbursts on the sexual problematic were in a sense a logical extension of his perception of the business of colonialism, which was the exercise of political, economic and military domination over the colonized at a cost acceptable to the colonial power.

The underlying thinking is also demonstrated by his educational policy in Eritrea. Motivating his adamant refusal to open schools, Martini wrote that he had no interest in complicating colonial rule by extending modern education to the Eritreans.[47] The best way to keep the Eritreans under the firm grip of colonialism was, according to Martini, through the establishment of a racial barrier strengthened by the exclusion of the Eritrean from western education.

In the colonial system led by Martini, the position of the Eritrean was that of a human being held under subjection by a militarily stronger nation for the interests of the latter. His destiny was to be ruled and kept in a world structurally different from that of the colonizer.

The era of rational imperialism, 1908—32

When Martini left Eritrea in 1907, the position of Italy vis-à-vis Eritrea and Ethiopia was much stronger. Economically, Italy had by 1905 reached a take-off stage. Although colonies had since Adwa become even more marginal, Italy was militarily and economically better prepared to deal with colonial matters.[48] On the political and cultural plane, Italy pursued, during the Giolittian age (1900—22), the path of democratization.[49] In colonial matters,

the appointment of Salvago-Raggi, a career diplomat as governor of Eritrea (1908—14), can certainly be taken as reflection of the new political and cultural climate in Rome.

The period of Salvago-Raggi witnessed first Italian colonial expansion in Somalia (1908—10) and secondly the Italian occupation of Libya (1911—12). In both cases, the Eritrean was called upon to facilitate colonial expansion at an acceptable price to Rome.[50] According to Salvago-Raggi, the function of Eritrea had become the production of mercenaries for Italian colonial wars of pacification in Libya.[51] During the 1911—32 period, Eritrea contributed a standing army of about 4,000 men. Without Eritrean participation in the pacification of Libya, the Italian position would have been untenable.[52] Not only were the Eritrean colonial soldiers cheap to equip and even cheaper to substitute, they were far superior to Italian soldiers in the battle against the Libyan nomads.[53] Eritrea as a reservoir of colonial soldiers, and the function of the Eritrean, first and foremost, as a colonial soldier, formed the basis for native policy. Although the position of the Eritrean during the period of Salvago-Raggi was defined exclusively in terms of Italian colonial interests elsewhere, we nevertheless do notice considerable differences of perception between Martini and his successor on the relations between the colonizer and the colonized. While for instance Martini, perceiving education as a potential enemy of colonialism, pursued a policy against its introduction, Salvago-Raggi and his superiors in Rome were laying down the basis for a special type of native education. The need for introducing western education was recognized, but at the same time it was argued that western education ought to be tailored and rationed on the grounds that the mind of the Eritrean, being infantile indiscriminate extension of western education could cause mental inbalance.[54] Slowly but steadily, the position of the Eritrean changed from being a dominated subject into that of a person, who owing to his mental aptitude, had to be dominated.[55]

The Salvago-Raggi period was indeed a period where a number of colonial policies co-existed alongside each other. In a study commissioned by the colonial administration after reviewing the policies of the earlier governors, and after stating the fact that for the Italians Eritrea had become a country of origin of colonial soldiers, the authors recommended a number of policies. They proposed that the colonial state treat the colonized as the subjects rather than the objects of colonial policy.[56] They also proposed that colonial economic policy ought to deal exclusively with the improvement of material conditions with emphasis on the civilizing mission of the colonial system. In conclusion, the main contradiction between the colonial state and the colonized, which hinged on confiscation of land and the treatment of the colony and its inhabitants as objects of plunder, would according to the authors be resolved through the respect of proprietary rights. The authors noted that the land law

of 1909 had gone a long way in protecting the rights of the Eritreans and that the colonial state spared no effort in implementing the provisions of the law. Concerning the type of relations between the colonizers and the colonized, the authors strongly stressed that Italy ought to adopt the British system of colonial rule.[57]

The above recommendations however, ran counter to those which were put forward by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later (since 1912) by the Ministry of Colonies, with the exception of, namely, the proprietary rights of the Eritreans. These rights had to be respected for two important reasons. Firstly, the cost of carrying out land alienation was beyond the budget earmarked by the Italian state for colonial adventures. Secondly, land alienation served no purpose, since very few prospective Italian peasants with the capital required by the colonial state, were willing to pour out their resources in a colony such as Eritrea whose future remained uncertain.[58]

Contrary to the recommendations of the authors, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the supreme source of colonial policies) and the Ministry of Colonies turned Eritrea into a reservoir for the recruitment of colonial soldiers for colonial expansion elsewhere. In 1920, Governor Ferroni pointed out that Eritrea ought not to be used as a guarantor for the security and defence of other colonies, and that it was futile to keep a complex administrative network if the Ministry of Colonies desired to reduce the colony into a 'field of mercenary soldiers'.[59] A decade later, Governor Zoli, commenting on the economic backwardness of the colony, wrote that he could provide without any difficulty a new battalion of soldiers (between 800 and 1,000 men) monthly for a whole year if such was the primary function expected from the colony.[60]

As the discussion on colonial administration below demonstrates, Italian native policies, in contrast to those of France and Britain, were hardly concerned with the problem of participation of the colonized in the political life of the colony. This did not mean that the colonized were not utilized in colonial administration, as indeed they were, but that their participation was limited to the maintenance of social organization designed more to ensure the continuation of colonial rule than its own dynamic development.[61]

Political Organization and Colonial Administration

Prior to the colonial period, the Tigrinya-speaking region, which formed the basis for colonial administration, was made up of five districts.[62] These were in turn sub-divided into about 34 territorial units called *medri*. Most often the *medri* was made up of one or several subdivisions called *gulti* of which there

were 65. The *gulti* territory was administered by a political officer known as the head of a *gulti*. A *gulti* area was sufficiently large for and was meant to provide the needs of the chief of the *gulti*. The over 800 villages, in an area of 5,500 sq. kms., and their organization under the 65 *gulti* provides an indication of the size of the latter.[63] The village constituted the smallest political unit and administered its affairs through a council of elders and a locally elected judge.

At the top sat a governor appointed by the Ethiopian emperor or by whoever had the hegemonic power in northern Ethiopia.[64] Under him were the rulers of the five districts, namely, Hamassien, Seraye, Akele-Guzay, Deki Tesa and Kohain. In many cases, a powerful figure ruled over several regions. Next came those responsible for the administration of *medri*. These were the most important group of the ruling elite since they were directly responsible for the collection and delivery of tribute.

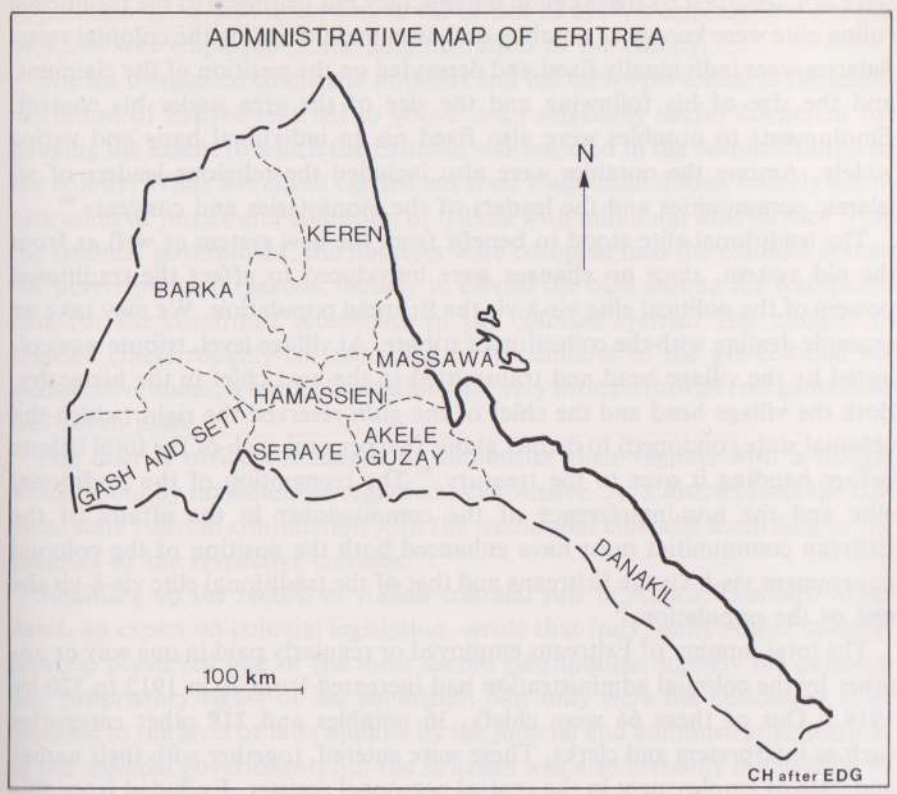
The organization of the colony into eight districts, a division that survives up to the present, was with the exception of the western lowlands, based on the historical and geographical factors that predate colonialism.[65]

The main function of the Italian district commissioner was to maintain law and order through the traditional ruling elite. Apart from the construction of the districts and the alienation of some thousands of hectares of land, the Italians concentrated on supervising the administration of the colony without any significant restructuring. District commissioners' offices were sparsely staffed and most of their budget was spent in forms of salaries to chiefs and their followers. This could be illustrated by a breakdown of the district's budget in relation to the tribute collected from the same district in the table below.

Table 4.1. Budget distribution of Seraye district for 1911—12 and for 1925—26.

Item	Amount in lire (1911—12)	Percentage of total expenses	Amount (1925—26)	Percentage
Salaries for chiefs, armed followers, gifts reception, etc.	75,600	82.4	146,900	68.6
Buildings and maintenance of roads	2,500	2.7	7,900	3.7
Office expenses	700	0.7	4,000	1.8
Subsidy for schools	500	0.5	300	0.1
Total expenses	91,700		214,045	
Tribute paid by the inhabitants of Seraye	154,000		270,000	

Sources: AE, 613 for 1911—12 and AE, 861.



Map 3. Administrative Map of Eritrea.

The most expensive item in the administration of the districts remained the salaries of traditional chiefs and their armed followers, which formed as a sort of provincial or territorial army. In the case of Seraye district salaries for chiefs and their armed followers constituted 82 per cent of the budget for 1911—12 and 68 per cent for 1925—26. A similar situation appeared to prevail in the remaining districts. During the 1925—26 financial year, the salaries for chiefs and their armed followers constituted for Keren 41 per cent; for Seraye 68 per cent; for Akele-Guzay 60 per cent; for Barka and Setit 71 per cent; for Asseb 77 per cent; for Massawa 31 per cent and for Hamassien 28 per cent.[66]

In 1912, throughout the colony there were three chiefs, 37 sub-chiefs, 33 assistants and 591 armed followers.[67] According to the Royal decree of 2.7.1908, the district commissioners were instructed to compile a list of those Eritreans who were salaried by the administration. In the first list that was compiled soon after the decree of 1908 there were a total of 70 chiefs and notables whose names were put into a special central register.[68] Those who

were not absorbed by the colonial bureaucracy but belonged to the traditional ruling elite were known as notables and were maintained by the colonial state. Salaries were individually fixed and depended on the position of the claimant, and the size of his following and the size of the area under his control. Emoluments to notables were also fixed on an individual basis and varied widely. Among the notables were also included the religious leaders of all islamic communities and the leaders of the monasteries and convents.[69]

The traditional elite stood to benefit from the new system as well as from the old system, since no changes were introduced to affect the traditional powers of the political elite vis-à-vis the Eritrean population. We may take an example dealing with the collection of tribute. At village level, tribute was collected by the village head and transmitted to the next chief in the hierarchy. Both the village head and the chief of the *gulti* reserved the right (which the colonial state condoned) to deduct about five per cent each of the total tribute before handing it over to the treasury.[70] The recognition of the traditional elite and the non-interference of the commissioner in the affairs of the Eritrean communities must have enhanced both the position of the colonial government vis-à-vis the Eritreans and that of the traditional elite vis-à-vis the rest of the population.[71]

The total number of Eritreans employed or regularly paid in one way or another by the colonial administration had increased from 70 in 1912 to 320 by 1918.[72] Out of these 66 were chiefs, 36 notables and 218 other categories such as interpreters and clerks. These were entered, together with their names and date of employment in the central personnel register. Excluded from this list were the armed followers of chiefs, who in 1912 numbered around 600. Excluding those employed by the colonial armed forces, the Eritrean contingent of the colonial civil bureaucracy was made up in the beginning of 1918 of a staff of 320. Salaries for chiefs and notables varied from 795 lire per month to the Islamic leader El Morgani, and 285 lire to the Prior of the Monastry of Debre Bizen and 21 lire to a Kadi (a Muslim judge) of a small town.[73]

The same degree of variation or differentiation also existed among the 157 interpreters, telegraphists and clerks. In 1918 there were 47 interpreters of six different grades. Those at the highest level, six of them, appeared to have been recruited before or soon after 1900. Those interpreters earned 150 lire per month, the ceiling for those employed in the civil bureaucracy. Next came interpreters of the first class followed by other classes with monthly salaries ranging from 125 lire to 60 lire for those in the fifth class. Unlike the interpreters, the majority of the telegraphists (total of 56) were recruited after 1910. Their monthly salaries ranged between 45 and 60 lire. The last group, made up of 64 messengers and apprentice clerks, constituted the lowest paid groups with monthly salaries ranging between 30 and 45 lire.[74] Of a total

population of 367,239 according to the census of 1917, it appears that one out of 1,200 was employed in the administration of the colony.[75]

The list of salaried chiefs and notables and the native personnel in the administration of Eritrea referred to above is an extremely useful document for gauging the extent to which the Eritrean was engaged in the administration of the colony. While the chiefs carried out their traditional duties, namely administration of justice and collection of tribute with minimum interference from the colonial government, the notables were co-opted into the colonial system for purely political reasons, namely to extend the base among the traditional elite for the continued acceptance of the colonial system. The number of salaried chiefs roughly corresponded to the number of the pre-colonial administrative zones, a strong indication that very little territorial reorganization had taken place.

The district officers managed to administer their regions with a budget which could by no means be regarded as expensive. At a district level the colonial state ruled in conjunction with the traditional elite and according to the customs of the respective cultures.

Summing up the record of Italian colonial rule in Africa, Gennaro Mondaini, an expert on colonial legislation, wrote that Italy, unlike other colonial powers, preserved one of the most sacred patrimonies, namely the personal and proprietary rights of the colonized. Not only were the customary rules elevated to the level of laws applied by the judicial and administrative sections of the colonial government, but the Eritrean was also certainly involved in its administration through the legal recognition of the chief as a court of first instance.[76] All civil matters between natives were tried by the chief and later remanded to or retried by the commissariat's tribunal. The so-called native courts thus had jurisdiction only over issues of private law among natives. The penal jurisdiction was, on the other hand, reserved to the courts of the colonial state and decisions were rendered according to the efficiency of the punishment. In other words, the colonial state could choose to provide punishment either according to customary laws or according to Italian penal codes.[77]

The structure for the administration of justice was made up of four court instances: a) the courts of chiefs which in turn contained several levels of instance, b) the court of the district officer assisted by chiefs and notables, c) the tribunal of the commissioner, d) the governor.

However, the structures as well as the philosophy for the administration of justice in the colonies, which scholars such as Martino Moreno and Gennaro Mondaini discussed in glowing terms, compared to the praxis of other colonies in fact left many things to be desired.[78]

The jurisdiction of the chief as a court of first instance was a shorthand description of a very complex system of courts which the Eritrean had to exhaust

before an appeal to the second court of instance became actual. At the lowest level, that is at the village level, a case was heard by the village judge. Rarely included in the list of chiefs and notables, the village judge was not salaried. Appointed by the colonial government from a family who carried hereditary rights, the judge remunerated himself by retaining a certain percentage of the tribute and by levying fines against litigants who refused to respect the rules of civil procedure. One of the main sources of income for the judge, and an effective instrument for speedy trial, was the fine which the judge could levy against a disobedient litigant.[79]

The amount fixed by the representatives of the population which adhered to the specific customary law in question was considered burdensome. According to the customary laws of the district of Akele-Guzay, the village judge levied six M.T., a fine which could be doubled and tripled.[80] During most of the colonial period, six M.T. constituted as much as two weeks' salary for a daily labourer or a colonial soldier.[81] Upon appeal, the case proceeded to the chief of a group of villages which shared common history e.g. Hadegti, Shewate Anseba, where the litigant was subjected to the same regime of procedure and where litigants paid a certain sum for the adjudication of cases in addition to the various types of income generated by the rules of procedure.

In contrast, the structure for the administration of justice among the Eritrean Moslem communities appeared to have been less complex. The kadi courts functioned as courts of first instance. On appeal, the cases proceeded to the sharia court which functioned in the same way as a national High Court. After 1935 all cases from all over Eritrea ended at the Sharia court at Asmara[82] where learned Eritrean and/or expatriate Moslems decided over the case.

The problem of administration of justice varied from one ethnic and cultural group to the other. Among the Tigrinyans, the colonial government left the precolonial judicial system unchanged by recognizing the judicial rights of the chiefs at all levels of the Eritrean society. The colonial government made its presence felt only after the traditional venues had been exhausted. This practice was a concession favourable to the traditional ruling elite, since they benefited materially from the execution of their work. For the individual litigant, the colonial judicial system meant that there were more instances to go through before reaching the court of last resort.[83]

Furthermore the judicial system thwarted the process of separation of powers between the Ethiopian king and the learned men who kept and interpreted the few written legal sources.[84] Since its introduction into Ethiopia, the *Fetha Nagast* (The Law of the Kings) remained in the possession of the high clergy, who not infrequently were asked to render a legal opinion. As the ultimate and unquestionable source of law, its keepers and interpreters (high clergy) functioned in such a way that even kings sought enlightenment on

some legal matters.[85] While recognizing the validity of customary laws, the colonial government stopped short of recognizing the need for the separation of powers within the world of the colonized. Misinterpreting the precolonial judicial system, the colonial government continued to maintain that the chiefs as well as the district officers and the governor retain executive and judicial powers as was the custom in Eritrea and Ethiopia.[86]

The colonial judicial system, although it was meant to be a reflection or a continuation of the precolonial system, was considerably different. The most important point of difference lay in the fact that Eritrean chiefs had more power than earlier. Backed by the colonial state, chiefs both at a village and sub-district level distorted the balance of power that existed between the chiefs, the elders and the members of the clergy.[87] Recruited and kept in office as long as they functioned as mouthpieces of the central administration at Asmara, the loyalty of the chiefs lay primarily with the colonial system. The arbitrariness of the colonial system can best be seen in the manner in which administration of justice was carried out. Based on the stereotype conception of the Eritrean as someone with a fine sense of speedy justice, no distinction was made between the executive and the judicial functions of the colonial government. The same district governor acted simultaneously as a judge, albeit assisted by notables paid by the colonial state, and as an administrator.

From 1908 until the early 1930's, the Italians pursued a native policy distinctly different from those of Britain and France. In the educational field, Italy remained firm in limiting education to the elementary level. Concerning the role of the Eritrean in the colonial administrative and political structures, Italian policy showed some similarities with the French system of colonial rule. Eritrea was administered in collaboration with the traditional elite, but in a more direct manner. The chief was appointed by the colonial state from among those who were traditionally entitled to the office.[88] Through a series of legislations, the colonial state separated the chief from his subjects by granting him certain privileges: a chief could not be arrested without the prior approval of the governor. Financially, the position of the chief was enhanced through regular wages and through the exercise of his judicial functions. Similarities between the Italian and the French systems could only be observed in their attitude to chiefs and their treatment.

The above privileges notwithstanding, the colonial state did not subscribe to the British ideal of indirect rule where the natives were ruled by their own leaders and the interference of the colonial officer was to be limited to 'persuasion in all possible circumstances'.[89] The Eritrean chief was a spokesman of the colonial state. His primary function was to provide all background knowledge for the district commissioner to make the appropriate decision. Even in the administration of justice, the power of the chief ended at the court of first instance. At the district level, the chief and notables participated in

an advisory capacity while the district commissioner passed judgement in disputes regarding the law of persons between Eritreans.[90]

From the above discussion, we can conclude that the primary concern of Italian native policy was the perpetuation of colonial rule. Through its educational policy, as we discussed in the preceding chapter, Italy attempted to resolve the problem of educated elites quite successfully. Through its praxis of direct rule, the colonial state prevented the Eritrean elite from developing towards autonomy within the colonial system. Italian native policy did not give the Eritreans any leeway to either enter into a dialogue with the colonial state over the nature of colonial rule or to challenge the basis of colonialism. The 1932—41 decade, as I shall presently discuss, introduced new elements into the relations between the colonizer and the colonized which even more drastically distinguished Italian native policy from that of its European counterparts.

From Paternalism to Apartheid, 1932—41

In 1932 Professor Lidio Cipriani published a study on the past and future destiny of the African peoples in which the psychical inferiority of the African was repeatedly presented as proven by scientific methods.[91] Three years later, the same author published a manual on Ethiopia which argued that the colonization of such inferior populations was an obligation for Europe.[92] The placing of ethnic groups into a classified intelligence scale was neither a practice developed just in the 1930's, nor were Africans the only groups to be classified in this manner.[93] What was strikingly different in the literature of the 1930's, was the advocacy of perpetual domination over the African on the grounds that the latter would never be able to govern himself.[94] The racism of the late nineteenth century was based on the technological superiority of Europe, and this led to paternalist colonial policies. Instead, the racial postulates of the 1930's were formed from an ideological base which called for racial separation and the immutability of relations between races.[95]

According to Professor Denis Mack Smith, the first law which set Italy on the course of apartheid, was promulgated in April 1937, nearly a year after the creation of the Italian East African Empire.[96] By virtue of this decree, an Italian citizen who maintained conjugal relations with an Eritrean was liable to imprisonment from one to five years. The law of 1937, as the then Minister of Colonies noted in his diary, was in effect put into practice as early as the summer of 1936.[97] In his directives to the Governor of the Italian East African Empire, the Minister of Colonies emphasized that the superiority of

Italians over the natives ought to be affirmed in every situation.[98]

One of the main arguments used to justify the introduction of the law of 1937 was said to be the desire to avoid psychical deterioration of the Italian race through miscegenation.[99] The half-castes, who until this period had the possibility of acquiring Italian citizenship, were presented as the typical consequence of racial degradation arising from miscegenation.[100] Perceived as a group who bore the worst elements of both races, the literature of the mid 1930's called for the prohibition of inter-racial cohabitation and for the classifying of the half-castes as belonging to the African race.[101]

The law of 1937 dealt with cohabitation. In theory as well as in practice, as the Catholic Church pointed out, an Italian could lawfully marry an Eritrean.[102] This loophole was however soon remedied by the law of 1938 that declared an inter-racial marriage null and void.[103]

In June 1939 the separation of races was made even more encompassing through the legislation on penal sanctions aimed at the defence of the prestige of the race in front of the natives of Italian East Africa. For the purpose of the law of 1939, any act committed by an Italian in abuse of his prestige as a member of the Italian race or who failing to come up to duties expected of him by the native population bringing about the lowering of the moral image of the Italian was liable to punishment.[104] Although this first article gave the colonial state unlimited power in controlling the conduct of the Italian citizen, the legislation specified further the types of criminal acts.

The law of 1937 which prohibited inter-racial cohabitation was restated in the law of 1939. A citizen who habitually frequented native public places was liable to imprisonment for up to six months and/or a fine. A citizen who without the written approval of the governor of the Colonial Empire accepted employment from a native, or who performed a task of a manual nature, was liable to a fine. Even a citizen who put himself in a state of manifest drunkeness in places reserved for natives was liable to imprisonment.[105] As far as the will of Italy on the race question was concerned, the final decisive law was promulgated in May 1940 categorically putting the half-caste into the world of the natives.[106] From 1940 the Italian East African Empire was inhabited by the Italians and the natives with positions clearly defined and without any in-between groups such as half-castes and educated natives.[107]

The policy and practice of the separation of races was less due to the alleged pathological inferiority of the African than to the objectives of colonialism and to the existence of a large celibate Italian population in the colonial empire. As already Ferdinando Martini understood, the purpose of colonialism was to rule as cheaply as possible. Italian policy makers of the 1930's were motivated by the same reasons which motivated Martini to oppose inter-racial cohabitation. The objective of Italy to use the newly-expanded empire as a colony of settlement could only be achieved after the colonial power had suc-

ceeded in establishing a distinct separation between the Italian colonist and the African colonized subject. A distinction had not only to be drawn between the colonizer and the colonized, but the position of the half-caste had also to be regulated. Uncontrolled sexual contacts between the Italian army of occupation, the majority of whom were single men, and African women, it was feared, would result in the growth of a half-caste population with serious political consequences.[108] By forbidding inter-racial cohabitation and by closing the possibility for the latter to acquire Italian citizenship, Italy created two polarized communities, namely the rulers and the ruled. This polarization made the implementation of native policy along 'apartheid' lines considerably easier to handle.

The widespread propaganda about the superiority of the Italian and that of the degenerated character of the half-caste was used, on the one hand to mobilize the Italian population against the colonized, and on the other hand, to rationalize colonization as an inevitable policy pursued by superior cultures.[109] The political motive behind the treatment of the half-caste was clearly explained by the director of Political Affairs in the Ministry of Colonies Martino Moreno, when he wrote that the uncontrolled growth of the half-caste population would create problems of a political nature.[110] The half-castes, according to Moreno, were not needed since Italy had no shortage of manpower for the purpose of colonization. He noted that half-castes had played an important role in situations where the colonial power was unable to send a sufficient number of its men to the colony.[111]

That the 'pathological inferiority' of the African was a rationalization for colonization emerged even in the writings of avowed fascists such as professor Cipriani. In the International Congress on Africa held in Rome in 1938, the main line of Professor Cipriani's argument emphasized that African emancipation ran counter to Italian needs of African resources.[112]

The impact of the racial laws on native policy was far-reaching. Prior to 1937 the Eritrean was perceived as a subject who could revolt against the colonial system if given the opportunity through education. Hence native policy was primarily concerned with how to prolong colonial rule through the dissemination of appropriate education and the strict adherence to the precolonial Eritrean social organization. Perceived as a subject with potential for equal development, the African was, prior to 1937, treated in a paternalistic manner in spite of the fact that Italy did not give the Eritrean any leeway to enter into a dialogue with the colonial state. Paternalism as a guiding philosophy was rejected because Italy perceived colonialism in terms of domination.

With the promulgation of the racial laws, the position of the Italy vis-à-vis the colony assumed an entirely different dimension. This new dimension was repeatedly explained by the director of Political Affairs in the Ministry of Colonies, Martino Moreno, who dominated discussions on native policy between 1937 and 1943. In one of early studies, Moreno explained that the most fundamental question of native policy was the recognition of the existence of a gap between the African and the white race:

> He who studies the history of the African people should recognize that they have created nothing universal. .... All those that are permanent, from the Obelisks of Aksum to the Castles of Gondar are ... products of foreign civilizations. It is thus utopian to think that Africans could be elevated quickly to the level of the Westerner. .... We are dealing with people who will never reach the age of maturity.[113]

The alleged pathological inferiority of Africans, a line of argument which Professor Lidio Cipriani had advocated since the early years of the 1930's, found clear confirmation in the Ministry of Colonies. All colonizers, argued Moreno, know through experience the mental inferiority of the African race, although some colonial powers pursue hypocritical policies on the issue.[114]

Specifying the objectives of native policy, Moreno wrote that Italy doesn't export the vote and the parliament to its colonies but it maintains the social organization of Eritreans based on a chain of chiefs who are independent of each other, and inspired by a rational sense of hierarchy.[115] In defending the objectives of Italian native policy vis-à-vis that of France with its assimilationist practice, and that of Britain which aimed at the 'development of an African society able to participate in the life of the modern world as a community of its own right',[116] Moreno pursued two lines of argument; firstly, Italy had the right to decide on the appropriate colonial policy, and secondly, neither the vote nor the parliament could be applied in Africa.

Concerning the impact of native policy on the colonized, Moreno confidently stated that through its social policies Italy would succeed in increasing the sentiments of gratitude on the part of the indigenous towards their dominators, who occupied a prestigious position not only because they were the bosses but also because of their capacity as teachers and benefactors.[117] Moreno assured the African that Italian colonialism would create a social-economic milieu that would enable him to develop according to the limits of his capacity.

The racial division of responsibilities fitted very well with the economic objectives which Italy aspired to achieve in the new empire. The empire was destined to accomodate several million Italian colonists. Moreover, it was expected to supply the mother country with raw materials. The African, whose position in the colonial system was, according to the racial theories of 1930's, defined by Mother Nature, was destined to assist the Italians in the realization of these objectives.

FOOTNOTES

1. During the colonial period, comparative studies mostly between the French and the British systems were motivated by the search for an efficient regime of colonialism. See Lucy Mair, *Native Policies in Africa*, London, 1936, especially chapter VII on Science and the Future of Africa, pp. 261—86, where the author poses the problems which require solutions. See also the posthumously published work of Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Enquiry into Race Relations in Africa*, New Haven, 1945, chapter XII, on Indirect Rule and its Scientific Management, pp. 138—50. For post colonial comparative studies see Michael Crowder's early article, 'Indirect Rule: French and British Styles', *Africa*, 34:3 (1964) 197—205.

2. In response to Crowder's comparative essay (1964), Kiwanuka pointed out that the so-called basic differences between the various colonial policies were mythical. The author stressed the biased assumptions and criticized the prevailing view which depicted the British as constantly applying a system of indirect rule, thus preparing Africa for independence. Semakula M. Kiwanuka, 'Colonial Policies and Administrations in Africa: The Myths of the Contrasts', *African Historical Studies*, 3:2 (1970) 295—315. The myth of the contrasts between the British and the French colonial policies had also been pointed out by Prosser Gifford and Timothy Weiskel, in their comparative study of native educational praxis in West Africa. 'African Education in a Colonial Context: French and British Styles', in *France and Britain in Africa*, edited by Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, New Haven, 1971, pp. 663—711.

3. F. D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, London, 1922, 3rd ed., 1926, p. 617.

4. Andrew Roberts, 'The Imperial Mind', in *The Cambridge History of Africa, vol. 7, from 1905 to 1940*, edited by Andrew Roberts, Cambridge, 1986, p. 49.

5. Lord F. D. Lugard, 'Native Policies in East Africa', *Foreign Affairs*, 9:1 (1930—31), p. 69. For a more exhaustive treatment on the ideological basis of indirect rule and the contradiction between indirect rule and democratic institutions, see Penelope Hetherington, *British Paternalism and Africa, 1920—1940*, London, 1978, pp.131—48; see also, A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *The Principles of Native Administration in Nigeria: Selected Documents, 1900—1947*, London, 1965, p. 28. For a more critical assessment of Lord Lugard's colonial thinking and policy, see I. F. Nicolson, *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900—1960: Men, Methods and the Myths*, Oxford, 1969, pp. 301—12.

6. Hetherington, *British Paternalism in Africa*, p. 140.

7. Ibid., p. 142.

8. Lord Hailey, *An African Survey*, Oxford, 1938, pp. 1639—40.

9. Lord Hailey warned that:

> The small educated element in Africa will grow, and will in time, contain stronger leaders of African native opinion than will the circle of traditional authorities. If you do not associate the educated element with your own governmental system you will drive it into a political activity of which the first victims will be the traditional authorities themselves.

'African and Indian Government', *United Empire*, 30 (1939) p. XIV, quoted by Hetherington, *British Paternalism*, p. 139.

10. Prosser Gifford and Timothy Weiskel, 'African Education', pp. 704—08.

11. In most British colonies, the African elite managed to carry out, within reasonable bounds, political dialogue with the colonial state and the metropole through an independent press and pressure organizations. See for example, Robert I. Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965, pp. 205—13; Jarle Simensen, *Commoners, Chiefs and the Colonial Government: British Policy and Local Politics in Akim Abuakwa, Ghana, Under Colonial Rule*, Ph.D. diss., Trondheim, 1975, vol. 2, p. XI.

12. In British Tropical Africa, the system of indirect rule came to an official end in 1947 because (as the Secretary for Colonies Sir Arthur Creech Jones argued) of its vagueness of ultimate objective and its unacceptability by local educated men and women. The despatch that dealt with the system of indirect rule is reproduced in Kirk-Greene, *The Principle of Native Administration*, pp. 238—48. The despatch called for the introduction of a system of grass-roots government at the local level as a step towards the preparation of a colony for national self-government. By 1947 European colonialism in Africa was challenged both by the United States and the Soviet Union. See *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940—1960*, edited by Gifford, P. and Louis, Wm. R., Yale University Press, 1982.

13. For a general survey of French Colonial Policy, Stephen H. Roberts's slightly outdated *History of French Colonial Policy, 1875—1925*, London, 1929, remains useful. On the theory and praxis of 'Assimilation', see Martin Deming Lewis, 'One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The "Assimilation" Theory in French Colonial Policy', *Contemporary Studies in Society and History*, 4:1 (1961) 129—53. On the decline of the theory of 'Association' see the contemporary study by M. M. Knight, 'French Colonial Policy: The Decline of "Association"', *Journal of Modern History*, 5:2 (1933) 208—24. On what I have designated the hybrid policy between 'Assimilation' and 'Association', the reflections of Hubert Deschamps, 'French Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa Between the Two World Wars', in *France and Britain in Africa*, edited by Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, New Haven, 1971, pp. 543—69, remains the most useful.

14. Stephen Roberts, *History of French Colonial Policy*, p. 68.

15. Lewis, 'One Hundred Million Frenchmen', pp. 134—35.

16. Ibid., p. 135.

17. Herbert Leuthy, *France Against Herself*, Paris, 1955, translated by Eric Mosbacher, New York, 1957, p. 211. See also the study by the former Minister of Colonies, Jacques Stern, *The French colonies*, New York, 1944, pp. 11—12.

18. Deschamps, 'French Colonial Policy', p. 562.

19. Lewis, 'One Hundred Million Frenchmen', pp. 147—48.

20. Raymond Buell in his exhaustive study on *The Native Problem in Africa*, New York, 1928, vol. 2, p. 79, wrote that there was no colour bar in French African colonies. The dividing line was between those who spoke French and those who did not. The persistence of the policy of assimilation and its coexistence with that of association was also pointed out recently. Discussing the long term impact of French educational policy in West Africa, O. B. Olurntimehin argued that, 'although there was a wide fear that unrestricted education could have revolutionary impact on the African, ... no complete break was made from the assimilationist policy'. 'Education and Colonial Domination in French West Africa from 1900 to the Second World War', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 7:2 (1974), p. 350. Those Africans who managed to go through the regular French curriculum were indeed very few but they appeard to have been sufficient to challenge colonial educational policies. See ibid., pp. 355—56. See also Raymond Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial History, 1890—1914*, Cambridge, 1961, pp. 8 and 22, on the objectives of assimilation and the continued implementation of assimilation even after its rejection as official policy.

21. I refer to the 'Indigenat' system that empower the district officer to summarily punish certain offences which in France were either not criminal or were contentious cases for the law courts. For an extensive discussion on the 'Indigenat', see Raymond Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, vol. 1, pp. 106—09.

22. M. M. Knight, 'French Colonial Policy', p.216.

23. Lucy Mair, *Native Policies In Africa*, London, 1936, p. 189.

24. Cf. Deschamps, 'French Colonial Policy', p. 568

25. Ibid..

26. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, 1957, Paternalism is defined as the system or principle of governing a country in a manner suggesting a father's relationship with his children.

27. Hetherington, *British Paternalism and Africa*, p. 45.

28. Anthony G. Hopkins, *An Introduction to Economic History of West Africa*, Oxford, 1973.

29. Cf. Jarle Simensen, *Commoners, Chiefs and Colonial Government*, vol. 2, p. XI; Raymond Betts, *Uncertain Dimensions*, pp. 162—63.

30. For the role of African elites in French Colonies, see Henri Brunschwig, 'The Decolonization of French Black Africa', in The *Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940—1960*, Yale University Press, 1982, pp. 211—14, edited by Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis.

31. Apart from Alberto Sbacchi's Ph.D. thesis, *Italian Colonialism in Ethiopia, 1936—40*, Chicago, 1975, the only other study on Italian colonial policy is that of

Giacomo Perticone, *La politica coloniale italiana negli atti, documenti e discussioni parlamentari*, Roma, 1972, a work of very limited relevance.

32. E. A. Scaglione, *Amedeo Duca D'Aosta*, Roma, 1953, p. 166.

33. Ibid., pp. 167—68.

34. Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale: La caduta dell'Impero*, Milano, 1981, p. 237.

35. Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini's Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1975, p. 123.

36. Sergio Romano, *La quarta sponda: La guerra di Libia, 1911— 12*, Roma, 1977, p. 218.

37. Aldo Mola, *L'Imperialismo Italiano: La politica estera dall'Unitá al fascismo*, Roma, 1980, p. 218.

38. Ibid., 220.

39. Alberto Sbacchi, *Italian Colonialism in Ethiopia*, pp. 6, 127, 181, 218—22.

40. Ferdinando Martini, *Nell'Africa Italiana*, Roma, 1891, in Aldo Mola, *L'Imperialismo Italiano*, pp. 83—87.

41. The parliamentary Commission of Enquiry that visited Eritrea in 1891 did not envisage that confiscation and expropriation of land could create political problems. See its report: *Relazione generale della Reale commissione d'inchiesta sulla colonia Eritrea*, Roma, 1891, pp. 177—95.

42. This has been described by Italian historians as 'Italian genocide of Eritrea'. See Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, vol. 1, pp. 435—42; Rainero, *L'anticolonialismo italiano da Assab ad Adua*, pp. 243—44.

43. Ferdinando Martini, *Il Diario eritreo*, vol. 1, p. 2.

44. ACS-Archivio Martini, busta 4, Martini to MAE 26.4.1901. For the Swedish end of the episode, see Viveca Halldin-Norberg, *Swedes in Haile Selassie's Ethiopia*, p. 106, note 13; Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus*, Uppsala, 1978, pp. 344—45.

45. Ibid.; Cf. Martini's views on colonial education.

46. ACS-Archivio Martini, busta 4, Martini to MAE 26.4.1901.

47. Martini, *Il diario eritreo*, vol. 2, p. 472, dated 27.5.1901.

48. The tripartite treaty between Italy, Britain and France over Ethiopia recognized the northern part of Ethiopia as falling under the Italian sphere of influence. For a text of the treaty see Herstlet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, pp. 440—44.

49. Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1870—1925*, London, 1967, pp. 237—81.

50. Eritrean soldiers remained in Libya until the end of 1934. See ACS-MAI Busta 4—6, Badoglio to Mussolini, 19.1.1935, document no. 131.

51. ASMAI pos. 115/2, file 15, Salvago-Raggi to MC 11.9.1914.

52. Ibid.. One of the worries of the Eritrean Governor, Salvago-Raggi, was that Eritreans were becoming aware that they were doing better than their Italian counterparts in Libya.

53. Ibid..

54. ASMAI, pos. 33/1, file 10, Foreign Minister Di San Giuliano to Parliament, 5.7.1910.

55. Ibid.. The Foreign Minister pointed out India, where the educated Indians challenged colonial rule, as an example of a misguided native policy of imparting Western Ideas on minds which were not ready to assimilate them properly.

56. Peglion, O., *La colonia Eritrea: condizioni e problemi*, Roma, 1913, pp. 25—27.

57. Ibid., pp. 65, 73.

58. As late as 1912, the former governor of Eritrea Ferdinando Martini (1897—1907) pointed out the lack of Italian interest on Eritrea and asked what Italy intended to do with the colony. Ferdinando Martini, 'L'Italia e l'Eritrea' in *L'Eritrea economica*, Novara, 1913, edited by Ferdinando Martini, p. 16.

59. ACS-MAI, busta 1, Governor Cerrina Ferroni to MC, Relazione annuale del 1920.

60. ASMAE, serie politici, pacco 1015, file 2901. Zoli to MC, Asmara 30.6.1930, p. 8.

61. Martino M. Moreno, 'La politica di razza e la politica coloniale italiana', *Gli annali dell'Africa italiana*, 2:2 (1939), p. 457. Moreno was the official responsible in the Ministry of Colonies for native policy.

62. See my 'Land Tenure and the Organization of Surplus Appropriation on the Eve of the Colonial Period', in *Notes on Nationalism and Resistance*, p. 30.

63. Ibid..

64. Ibid..

65. Prior to 1903, Eritrea was divided into four districts, three of which were the highland districts of Hamassien, Seraye and Akele Guzay. Between 1903 and 1906, Governor Martini created the Sahel, Gasc-Setit, Assab and Barca districts. See his report to Parliament, *Relazione sulla colonia Eritrea del Reggio Commissario Civile*

Deputato Ferdinando Martini per gli esercizi, 1902—1907, Roma, 1913, vol.1, pp. 51—53.

66. AE 613 for administrative costs of the remaining districts.

67. R.D. of 2.7.1908, no. 325.

68. AE 950, Elenco dei capi stipendiati dall'amministrazione coloniale, Luglio, 1908.

69. Out of 15 religious leaders paid by the colonial state, only one was a member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

70. For the rights of deducting some of the tribute, see Ruffilo Perini,'Zona di Asmara: circoscrizione storica', *Rivista Militare* (1894) p. 48. See also Alberto Pollera, *Il regime della proprieta terreira' in Etiopia e nella colonia Eritrea*, Roma, 1913, pp. 17—23. These rights were recognized by the administrative ordinance of 1937, i.e., R.D. of 15.11.1937, Ordinamento politico, amministrativo e militare per l'Africa Onrientale Italiana, article 91.

71. The task of the district commissioner was made easier for two reasons. Firstly, the colonial state refrained from expropriating/confiscating land, thus taking a delicate issue out of the commissioner's hands. Secondly, the colonial state held fast to its policy against forced labour. With these two major problem areas put aside, the district commissioners' main task remained the administration of justice, a task that could be undertaken with considerable impartiality.

72. ASMAI pos. 35/17, file 68: Elenco dei capi e notabili indigeni stipendiati e del personale indigeno in servizio dell'amministrazione civile dell'Eritrea al 1 gennaio 1918.

73. Ibid..

74. Ibid..

75. In contrast the Italian administrative staff was in 1931 made up of 627 men and 14 women, altogether 641 as reported by Vittorio Castellano, 'La popolazione italiana dell'Eritrea dal 1920 al 1940, *Rivista Italiana di Demografia e Statistica*, 2:4 (1948), p. 533.

76. Gennaro Mondaini, 'La politica indigena', in *Aspetti dell'azione italiana in Africa, Atti del Convegno di Studi Coloniali*, Firenze, 1946, pp. 79—115.

77. R.D. of 2.7.1908: Ordinamento giudiziario della colonia Eritrea, no. 325 recognized in broad terms the judiciary powers of the chiefs. These powers were laid down in detail in the subsidiary legislation: Regolamento giudiziario per l'Eritrea, Asmara, 11.7.1908, pp. 146—65. See also, Moreno, 'La politica coloniale indigena nell'Africa Orientale Italiana', *Gli Annali dell'Africa Italiana*, 6:1 (1942), p. 71.

78. Ibid.; see also R.D. of 20.6.1935; Ordinamento giudiziario per la colonia Eritrea, article 1.

79. Vicenzo Mellana, 'L'amministrazione della giustizia nell'Africa Orientale Italiana, 1936—40', Roma, 1972, pp. 186—95.

80. Ibid., p. 190.

81. See Mellana, 'L'amministrazione della giustizia', p. 191.

82. R.D. of 20.6.1935; Ordinamento giudizario per la colonia Eritrea, articles 42, 44.

83. In the district of Hamassien litigants had to exhaust four court instances before they reached the tribunal of the commissioner. According to an unidentified source used by Mellana in his review of administration of justice in Eritrea during the colonial period, the chiefs were widely abusing their prerogatives.

84. *The Fetha Nagast* or The Law of the Kings was an ancient document that traced its origin to the Roman Period. Meant to regulate the conduct of kings, commoners and the priesthood, the Fetha Nagast has been taken as the highest source of law since its translation into the Ethiopic language in the sixteenth century.

85. Tzadua, P. (Abba), *The Fetha Nagast*, Addis Ababa, 1966, pp. XX—XXVIII.

86. Ibid..

87. Indeed, the court of the Ethiopian emperors was the court of last instance. However, Ethiopian emperors passed judgement according to the prescription of the Fetha Negast as explained to them by the higher clergy.

88. The colonial admnistration, however, had no problem in finding eligible candidates, largely due to the fact that the traditional ruling elite (political office) was rarely hereditary.

89. Lucy Mair, *Native Policies in Africa*, London, 1936, p. 123.

90. R.D. of 20.6.1935: Ordinamento guidiziario per la colonia Eritrea, article 35.

91. Lidio Cipriani, *Considerazione sopra il passato e l'avvenire delle popolazione Africane*, Firenze, 1932, pp. 17—18, 111—19, 162.

92. Lidio Cipriani, *Impero Etiopico: Un assurdo etnico*, Roma, 1935. Professor Cipriani became one of the editors of the official periodical that was entrusted with the defence of the purity of the Italian race against Jewish and Black African encroachments. The periodical, *La Difesa della Razza* was published between 1938 and 1941.

93. See Alfredo Capone, *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 20, Torino, 1981, pp. 458—59.

94. Cipriani, *Considerazione sopra il passato e l'avvenire*, pp. 111—19.

95. Ibid.; Mola, *L'imperialismo italiano*, pp. 218—20.

96. R.D. of 19.4.1937, no. 880: Sanzioni per i rapporti d'indole coniugale fra cittadini e sudditi.

97. Alessandro Lessona, *Memorie di Alessandro Lessona*, Firenze, 1959, pp. 298—99.

98. Ibid..

99. Martino M. Moreno, 'La politica di razza e la politica coloniale italiana', *Gli annali dell'Africa Italiana*, 2:2 (1939), p. 459; Nicola Marchitto, *La difesa della Razza nell'impero: Il problema dei meticci*, Napoli, 1939; Sangiorgi, G.M., 'Una problema da evitare: Il metcciato', *Atti del terzo congresso di studi coloniali*, Firenze, 1937, vol. 2, pp. 129— 34; Mutinelli, M., 'La difesa della razza nell'Africa Orientale Italiana', *Atti del terzo congresso di studi coloniali*, Firenze, 1937, vol. 2, pp. 170—77; Neri, I., 'Caratteri della politica indigena fascista', *Atti del terzo congresso di studi coloniali*, Firenze, 1937, vol. 2, pp., 134—42.

100. Prior to 1940 the half-castes had the legal possibilities to acquire Italian citizenship according to articles 17 and 18 of the R.D. 6.7.1933: Ordinamento organico per l'Eritrea e Somalia. See Agresti L., 'I meticci e la carta fondamentale dell'Eritrea e della Somalia', *Atti del secondo congresso di studi coloniali*, Firenze, 1934, vol. 6, pp. 191—201.

101. Ibid..

102. See Brucculeri, A., 'Chiesa e Stato nella politica della razza', *Antischiavismo: Rivista di studi coloniali e missionari*, 49:1—3 (1937) 21—24.

103. 'Lineamenti della legislazione per l'impero', *Gli annali dell'Africa Italiana*, 2:3 (1939) p. 71.

104. Legge of 29.6.1939, no. 1004: Sanzioni per la difesa del prestigio di razza di fronte ai nativi dell'Africa Italiana.

105. Ibid..

106. Legge no. 822, 13.5.1940.

107. Martino M. Moreno, 'La politica di razza e la politica coloniale italiana', *Gli annali dell'Africa Italiana*, 2:2 (1939), p. 458. Placing Italian native policy in its historical perspective, Moreno maintained that ever since Italy has set foot in Africa it has pursued racist policies.

108. Ibid..

109. See Rava, M., 'Politica sociale verso gli indigeni e modi di collaborazione con essi', R. Addademia d'Italia, *Convegno*, p. 758.

110. Moreno, 'la politica di razza e politica coloniale', p. 463.

111. Ibid., 462.

112. Cipriani, 'Razze africane e civiltá dell'Europa', R. Addademia d'Italia, *Convegno*, p. 559.

113. Moreno, 'La politica di razza e politica coloniale', p. 457.

114. Ibid..

116. Lucy Mair, *Native Policies in Africa*, p. 123.

117. Moreno, 'La politica di razza e politica coloniale', p. 458.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIMITATIONS OF THE IDEOLOGY OF COLONIALISM: THE THREAT OF RESISTANCE TO COLONIAL RULE

Between May and August 1889 the Italians occupied the Eritrean highlands without firing a single shot. There was virtually no resistance to colonization.[1] The famine had started in 1888 and it was followed by a cholera epidemic and a hitherto unknown cattle disease. It was these conditions which undermined the resistance capability of the Eritreans.[2] There were also other factors. The attempts by Egypt, the Mahdist Sudan and then finally Italy to extend their possessions into the Eritrean highlands had turned the latter into a battleground with dire consequences for the population.[3]

In their march to Keren and Asmara, the key points in Eritrea, the Italians weve aided by the then Eritrean political elite.[4] Furthermore, the occupation of some areas of the highlands, which had formed an integral part of Ethiopia, were made in accordance with the Italo-Ethiopian treaty of Wichale dated May 1889.[5] Thus in addition to the crisis of the Eritrean people caused by the Great Famine, the ceding of parts of the highlands to the Italians further undermined their will to resist. In January 1 1890, when Italy consolidated its Red Sea possessions into a colony, henceforth known as Eritrea, the inhabitants of the region were still suffering from the Great Famine which lasted until 1892. Coinciding with a period of great social and economic stress, Italian colonization won the support of groups most affected by it, such as as labourers and colonial soldiers. The Italians gave famine relief to their loyal supporters.[6]

The ease with which Italy occupied the highlands and the success of the colonial state in eliminating members of the Eritrean political elite without arousing any resistance among the population, strengthened the Italian belief in the colony's subjugation to its will. Between 1890 and 1891, the colonial state eliminated more than half of the traditional political elite together with their supporters. Over one thousand people were summarily executed in a 'pacification' process, described by contemporary writers as the genocide of the inhabitants of Massawa.[7] The widespread liquidation of the elite and their followers, documented by Johannes Kolmodin in 1908, was not a response to

any resistance by the elite as there was none, nor did Italian pacification arouse any general resistance by the Eritrean people.[8] The 1890—1891 repressive action had, according to the informants of Kolmodin, a stunning effect on the population. Those chiefs who were not killed on the spot were detained at Nokra, near Assab and many later died in prison.[9]

From 1889 the raison d'être of the Italian expansion in Africa was explained exclusively in terms of a solution to the emigration problem. By creating its own colony of settlement, Italy could settle its citizens on Italian territory, thus keeping them in perpetual contact with the mother country. Eritrea was to be an extension of Italy in language, culture and population. On the basis of a report submitted by a parliamentary commission, which visited Eritrea between April and May 1891, Italy and the colonial government initiated an ambitious policy of turning Eritrea into a colony of settlement.[10] Between 1893 and 1895 more than fifty per cent of all cultivated land in the Eritrean highlands was confiscated by the colonial state and set aside, at least juridically, for Italian colonists. This massive confiscation of land resulted in the only notable manifestation of resistance to foreign rule and this was to have a considerable impact on subsequent colonial policy.

Nature and Scope of Resistance

Resistance is essentially a political concept. For our purpose resistance is defined as any collective or individual action against the presence of alien political domination, with the express objective of freeing the region, locality or villages from such foreign domination.[11] In explaining the organization of resistance and the degree of participation, such terms as 'elite resistance' and 'mass-based resistance' are useful.[12] Seen within the above-mentioned conceptual framework, Eritrean resistance to colonial rule is characterized by its paucity. The sparse and scattered acts of resistance, however, appeared to have limited the full implementation of many colonial policies.

Although the most notable act of resistance took place only in December of 1894, by 1890 it had become clear to many Eritrean leaders that the only alternative available to them was to cross the border into Ethiopia and continue their resistance from there. Of the many members of the political elite who fled from colonial rule mention is here made only to the most notable.

In contrast to the mass-based resistance of 1894, I have used the term 'elite resistance' to designate those acts of the political elite which lacked a wider following.

The persistent resistance by Aberra is vividly recounted by Kolmodin.

Aberra came from the region of Hamassien and was probably one of the few surviving members of the political elite who hoped to remain in the country by collaborating with the Italians. In February 1892 a rumour was spread that Aberra was suspected of opposition to Italian rule and would soon be detained. Instead of either fleeing or go into hiding, Aberra gathered his forces and waited until an expeditionary force was sent to capture him. He defeated the expeditionary force, killing the Italian commander, Captain Bettini, and then went into hiding in Asmara.[13] After an extensive search to capture him had failed, the authorities lost hope of tracing him. Aberra then gathered some of his followers around him and left for Ethiopia.

An inspiring hero for the people of Hamassien, Aberra was given an audience by Emperor Minilik. After hearing the story, the Emperor is alleged to have said 'From a thousand Amhara a single Aberra'.[14] The Ethiopian emperor elevated Aberra to the position of Degiac in the Ethiopian army. Later, during the battle of Adwa in March 1896, Degiac Aberra played a crucial role in disrupting enemy communication lines. Unsuccessful in freeing his country from the Italians, Aberra lived the rest of his life in central Ethiopia.

Although there is little mention of Aberra in Italian sources after 1896, there are many references to Mohamed Nuri and Gebremedhin Hagos. Apart from the knowledge that Nuri originated from the Saho ethnic group, on the eastern edges of the Eritrean plateau, there is little other biographical information on him. In his diary of July 1902, Martini writes as if he already knew Nuri from before and describes him as 'the notorious brigand'.[15] Gebremedhin Hagos on the other hand was well known. He was the son of Bahta Hagos who in 1894 organized the most notable mass-based resistance in Eritrea. After the collapse of the 1894 resistance, Gebremedhin escaped to the Ethiopian region of Tigrai. Between 1895 and 1904 Gebremedhin repeatedly tried to persuade the rulers of Tigrai to assist him in the war against the Italians. An already deeply divided Tigrai was however in no position to entertain his plea.

Although Gebremedhin enjoyed an esteemed reputation and respect as the son of a martyr, he did not trouble the colonial government in Eritrea to the same extent as Nuri, who through forays into Eritrea harassed the movement of the colonial army. Sometime between 1890 and 1891, Nuri asked the permission of Ras Mekonnen, the territorial governor of northern Ethiopia, to assassinate Ferdinando Martini, the governor of Eritrea.[16] In early February of 1903, Nuri was temporarily detained in Adwa by Degiac Gebre Selassie, an Ethiopian ally of Italy, who had signed an extradition agreement with the Italians. Nuri's reputation and his alliances with Ethiopian political leaders were so strong that Degiac Gebre Selassie refused to extradite him without the express authorization of the Ethiopian emperor.

In the summer of 1903, Nuri and a small group led by Gebremedhin Hagos settled in the vicinity of the Eritreo-Tigrai border. We do not know the extent to which Nuri and Gebremedhin succeeded in inspiring the desertion of small bands from the regions of Akele-Guzay and Seraye, a movement which was significant during the governorship of Martini. On June 30, 1900, Martini noted in his diary that that desertions and armed confrontations between the colonial army and those who resisted its presence constituted the daily menu (il menu quotidiano) in Eritrea.[17]

Mass-based resistance coincided with a major change in colonial policy, together with the recovery from the great famine of 1888—1892. With elite resistance suppressed, the colonial state felt that the time had come to build up the colony's infrastructure, necessary for the purpose of settling Italian landless peasants. Encouraged by information from the two agricultural experimental stations, the colonial government began to confiscate vast tracts of land from Eritreans for its own citizens. By the beginning of 1894 the settling of Italian peasants had already begun. The policy of settling peasants, although finally abortive, was to be the major cause of the most notable mass-based resistance to colonial rule in Eritrean history.

On December 14, 1894 Bahta Hagos, the leading chief of Akele-Guzay and Seraye and a trusted man since 1888, gathered his forces of about two thousand men and issued his call for resistance.[18] Unlike Aberra, his position was not jeopardized. Converted to Catholicism sometime between 1889 and 1890, Bahta was considered an ideal collaborationist. From the outset Bahta realized that for resistance to be successful, the collaborating elites, the peasantry and the Ethiopian state had to be brought together. According to Ardemani who was in the area at the time of the resistance, Bahta, after arresting Leutenant Sanguinetti and two Italian telegraph operators, sent messages to the collaborating elites and to the peasantry to join him in resisting the Italians. The content of the message was expressed in what later became an historical idiom: 'There is no medicine for the bite of a white snake'.[19] He is alleged to have written repeatedly to the rulers of Tigrai, though none of his letters have been traced.[20] The Italians believed that Bahta kept the rulers of Tigrai and the Ethiopian emperor fully informed. According to Cappucci, Bahta wrote several letters to Minilik, in which he warned the Emperor not to play the Italians' game. Minilik, in reply, is alleged to have assured Bahta that eventually all would go well and advised him to exercise more patience until further instructions arrived.[21]

The next day on December 15, Ardemani continued, war preparations issued from the headquarters of Bahta spread to the greater part of the Eritrean highlands.[22] On the same day Bahta further explained the motives for his resistance with the rhetorical question: 'What do we do with the Italians who have come to take our lands away?'.[23] Satisfied with a seemingly unanimous reply of 'war', Bahta proceeded to plan the course of resistance. His confidence was probably reinforced by the assurances of support that he received from the rulers of Tigrai and the Emperor Minilik. Bahta could have strengthened and better organized his forces if he had immediately attacked the poorly defended fort at Halay, a few miles south west of his headquarters. His three days delay allowed the Governor General Baratieri to dispatch an army of 3,500 men from Asmara and Massawa. Fully aware of the presence of Italian forces in the area, Bahta belatedly attacked the fort on December 18, and the battle was as good as lost. The colonial army surrounded Bahta's forces and within a few hours the resistance had been crushed and Bahta himself killed by a fifth columnist.[24]

A mass-based anti colonialist movement was thus clearly expressed for the first time since 1889 when colonialism had begun to deny the peasantry its only means of livelihood. The suppression of the Bahta led resistance was not sufficient to banish his ghost and the probability of another uprising. With the idea of completely suppressing any further resistance, Baratieri decided to invade Tigrai, where the followers of Bahta were regrouping. What started as a limited campaign turned into a battle about the colonization of Ethiopia. In the battle of Adwa, March 1 1896, Italy lost four thousand soldiers.[25]

According to Italian as well as Ethiopian historiography, the battle of Adwa was fought not over Italian land policy in Eritrea, but over the position of Italy in Ethiopia.[26] A brief recapitulation of the political background is necessary. By virtue of article 17 of the treaty of Wichale of 1889, the Italians argued that Ethiopia was their protectorate.[27]

The Ethiopians counter-argued by maintaining that the said article in its Amharic version implied no such relinquishment of sovereignty and that Ethiopia was and would remain independent.[28] The picture was complicated by the British and German positions in favour of the Italian interpretation of the treaty. The treaty was due for revision in 1894 and the Ethiopian emperor forced the issue into the open by making it known that Ethiopia would altogether revoke the treaty.[29] Supported by its European allies, Italy responded that article 17 of the treaty on the Italian protectorate over Ethiopia was irrevocable. It was in this political climate that the Bahta uprising took place. From the perspectives of the colonial state, the Bahta uprising involved from the beginning the Ethiopian state in the armed confrontation, which began in December 1894[30] and ended with the battle of Adwa on the first of March 1896.

The outcome of the battle of Adwa was that Italy recognized the full sovereignty of Ethiopia by renouncing the treaty of Wichale of 1889. The Eritreo-Ethiopian boundary agreement of 1889 was also officially revoked, though the Italians were allowed to remain within the frontiers of 1890 until a joint delimitation of boundaries.[31] While these were the political gains, the

repercussions of the Italian defeat at Adwa on Eritrea were even more important.

The defeat of Adwa highlighted the fact that Italian interest lay in the Mediterranean and not in Africa.[32] The cost in terms of human lives and resources was far beyond what the Italian state was prepared to tolerate.[33] It was also perceived that the defeat was brought about by a series of provocative measures taken by the Eritrean colonial government against Ethiopia.[34] The marginal importance of colonies was repeatedly emphasized and it was stated that if Italy did not abandon Eritrea altogether, at the least, it should not be drawn into similar and costly colonial adventures. This was made clear with the appointment of Martini as governor, when he was instructed to either administer the colony within a limited and fixed budget, or abandon the colony to its own fate.[35]

From 1897 the colonial state introduced a series of rectifying measures of which the most important were the cessation of land confiscation and the recognition of certain privileges for the Eritrean political elite.[36] As far as Eritrea was concerned, the cause of the Bahta uprising had been the confiscation of land, and the colonial state quite correctly reasoned that it could defuse resistance by a correct handling of the land question.[37] Aware that the confiscation of land from the Tigrinyan owners could have wider anti-Italian repercussions, the colonial state discouraged further land confiscation. The fear of a combined Eritrean and Ethiopian resistance was a major worry for Italian colonial policy until the Italo-Turkish war of 1911— 12.[38]

The main lesson learnt from the Bahta uprising was that any colonial policy of land alienaton would arouse such political unrest that would bring forth support from Ethiopia. By 1912, although the colonial state had eliminated the possibility of another uprising by renouncing land alienation, it nevertheless resorted to the Bahta uprising in order to discourage some sections of colonialist opinion calling for more ruthless policies of exploitation.[39]

The Bahta uprising was seen as an example of misguided policies and the defeat at Adwa as an adventurist exercise of foreign policy. Moreover, colonial policy since 1912 was not dictated by a fear of resistance but by the new role of Eritrea as a supplier of colonial soldiers for Italy's colonial war in Libya.[40] The colonial state's desire not to provoke resistance was not based on the prohibitive cost of putting it down. Rather, it was due to a rational calculation that political stability in Eritrea made possible the extraction of cheap and efficient colonial soldiers for Libya. Thus from 1912 onwards, colonial policy had no reason to take into account the threat of Eritrean resistance.

The Ethiopian Factor in the Emergence of Irredentist Sentiments, 1924—34

Intelligence reports compiled at the beginning of the First World War were concerned with the rumours that the young Ethiopian crown prince Eyassu[41]had refused to be crowned before he had driven the Italians out of Eritrea and that the people of Hamassien (i.e. the Tigrinyans) would support him.[42] These rumours were first spread in Asmara. The crown prince was removed in 1916 before the fulfillment of his ambitions and the Ethiopian threat ceased in the 1920's until the reorganization of the Ethiopian state by the late emperor Haile Selassie.

The rumours of an Ethiopian invasion of Eritrea, however, confirmed: 1) the realization by Eritreans that they could not confront the colonial state on their own; and 2) the precolonial unity between the Tigrinyans and the Amharas within the traditional political system.

The colonial state in 1924 began to be aware of the impact on Eritrea of Ethiopian modernization. This was in connection with the activities of the Swedish mission, which according to the colonial government encouraged its student to leave for Ethiopia.[43] In a dispatch to the Ministry of Colonies, the Eritrean Governor pointed out that, 'students from the Swedish mission demonstrate a major attachment to Ethiopia rather than to Eritrea'. The colonial administration launched an obstructionist policy towards the Swedish mission, until the dismissal of the mission from Eritrea in 1932.[44] However, this attachment by Swedish mission students to Ethiopia appeared to have aroused the colonial government to re-examine relations between the colony and Ethiopia. The Swedish mission and its educational work raised questions about the loyalty of the Eritrean people to Italian colonial system.

One of the strategies that the colonial state had persistently pursued since 1926 was the breaking 'once and for all of the multitude of traditional links' between the Tigrinyan and the Ethiopian populations.[45] The Ministry of Colonies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed with the Governor of Eritrea on the necessity of severing links between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and negotiations were undertaken between the Italian delegation in Cairo and the Coptic Patriachate.[46] In 1929, the Italians succeeded in persuading the Egyptian head of the Coptic Church to appoint a patriarch for the empire of Ethiopia which excluded any ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Eritrea.[47]

The separation of Eritrean Christians from Ethiopian spiritual jurisdiction was a step in the right direction according to the Italian view but, as Governor Zoli noted, it was not sufficient. Concerned about the growing links between the churches in Eritrea and those in Ethiopia, Zoli informed his superiors:

> I have always maintained and continue to maintain that the only way to resolve the growing and preoccupying situation and to liberate ourselves once for all ... is through the appointment of an Egyptian bishop for Eritrea.[48]

Zoli thought that unless the Tigrinyans, who shared the same language and religion with societies in Ethiopia, were provided with their own spiritual leader, their local churches would continue to function as the 'hotbed of Ethiopian nationalism'.[49]

Zoli's suggestion for an Egyptian bishop was rejected by the Catholic mission, which feared that the presence of a bishop would revitalize the Orthodox Church to the detriment of Catholic activity. This argument prevailed and instead, a year later, the Italians managed to put Eritrea under the direct authority of the patriarchate in Cairo.[50]

The second strategy of the colonial government was to try to sever links between Tigrinyans and their co-religionists in Ethiopia by Catholicizing Eritrea.

In his study on religion and politics in Italian colonialism, Cesare Bounaiuti has argued that the reasons for the failure of the Catholicization of Eritrea in general, and the limited success of the Catholic mission, was due to the vacillation by the colonial state in its relations with the Catholic mission.[51] The author emphasized that the colonial state narrowly interpreted religious liberties in the colony and this policy relegated the Catholic mission to the same level as Islam and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.[52] But the dismal record of the Catholic mission in converting only 8,000 Eritrean Orthodox members in over fifty years can not only be explained by the failure of the colonial administration to assist the Catholic mission.[53]

Access to the archives of the Catholic mission is not easy and the dearth of literature hardly needs to be emphasized. Even so, Bounaiuti would have had to re-evaluate the role of the colonial government if he had consulted Metodio Da Nembro's exhaustive study on the history of the Catholic mission in Eritrea.[54] Metodio Da Nembro wrote his study in 1953 from mission archive sources long after the fall of Italian colonialism.

The fulcrum of Catholic missionary activity remained the Tigrinyans and Da Nembro accounted for the slow rate of conversion to the compact opposition of the Orthodox Church.[55] In the early years of the colonial period the Orthodox Church threatened excommunication against those who changed their religion.[56] By the 1920's this method appeared to have changed. Explaining the difficulties of converting the Eritrean Orthodox, the head of the Catholic mission wrote in 1929 that '... the work of propaganda is strongly obstructed by the existence of a distinct national pride'.[57] He also referred to a watchful monastic network which made the population adhere to its faith.[58]

If the Catholic mission had had little success in converting Eritreans in the years up to 1929, the decade of the 1930's was to prove even more difficult.

The head of the Catholic mission pointed out that the colonial policy of putting Eritrea under the direct dependency of the Patriarchate in Cairo had increased the pride of the people, thus making it more difficult to carry out conversion.[59] The opponents of the Catholic mission were the monks of the Debre Bizen monastery who had powerful influence over their people. Similar views were also expressed in 1933, when the Orthodox world was described as 'more diffident than the past as can be seen by the way the monastery of Bizen mobilizes the village clergy in the protection of the faith'.[60]

According to the census of 1928 there were 8,473 Catholics and 239,000 Orthodox in Eritrea.[61] This figure includes both Catholic migrants from Ethiopia[62] as well as those who were born into Catholic families, and thus the number of converts was far less than the figures indicated in the census. Although the motive of colonization, was not the Catholicization of the colony, the colonial state assisted the Catholic mission. Colonial policies were concerned with the spreading of Italian culture, of which Catholicism was an inseparable part.[63] The entrusting of schools from 1923 to the Catholic mission and the expulsion in 1932 of rival foreign missions were the maximum measures that the colonial government could take without contradicting its objectives.[64]

While the Catholic mission appeared to have accepted its very limited success in converting Eritrean Orthodox, a series of events in Ethiopia and their repercussions were being felt in Eritrea. Over two years the colonial state noticed among the Tigrinyans sporadic feelings of irredentism, which called for immediate measures by the colonial government. These irredentist agitations were caused by the coronation of Haile Selassie, by the promulgation of the first Ethiopian constitution in 1931 and by a slow but steady process of centralization implemented by the enlightened new monarch at Addis Abeba.

The coronation of Haile Selassie in 1930 upset the religious policy of the colonial state. Although Eritrea had been separated from Ethiopia on spiritual matters, the coronation was characterized by a strong participation of Eritrean monasteries. The religious links which the Italians had wished to sever appear to have been particularly strengthened, at a time when contacts between Addis Abeba and Asmara had greatly improved. When learning about Haile Selassie's gifts to Eritrean monasteries, the Minister of Colonies informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that,

> ...the Ethiopian government's intentions of exercising authority over the Eritrean Church and neutralizing the connections between Italy and the Patriarchate at Cairo were too evident.[65]

The Ethiopian Consul at Asmara, Ato Wedajo Ali, was accused of inciting Ethiopian nationalism among the Tigrinyans, with apparently considerable success.

The objective of breaking the bonds of unity between the Tigrinyans and the people of Ethiopia,by establishing a separate Eritrean Church was to ensure Eritrean loyalty to the Italian colony. However, this aim was frustrated by the persistence of religious links. On the contrary, as the head of the Catholic mission observed, the religious unity appeared to have become more pronounced during the early 1930's than in the preceding decades. With catholicization virtually ruled out as an alternative strategy, the colonial government and Italy began to take cognizance of developments in Ethiopia and their impact in Eritrea with considerable anxiety.

Repercussions of developments in Ethiopia continued in 1931 with the promulgation of a constitution which, at least juridically, turned Ethiopia into a parliamentary state.In assessing the impact of this on Eritrea, Governor Astuto, commented that its implementation would be a major step towards centralization. As to its impact on Eritrea, the Governor described it as '...naturally dangerous because the establishment of a sort of a parliamentary regime reinforces those vague aspirations of irredentism'.[66]

Colonial dispatches from Eritrea for the years 1926 to 1932, give a strong impression of a rapidly changing Ethiopia in relation to the colony of Eritrea. The migration of educated Eritreans to Ethiopia in search of better jobs, the growing spread of Ethiopian political and economical power up to Eritrean borders, and continued Ethiopian contacts with Eritrean monasteries, all appear to have exerted considerable pressure on the Eritrean colonial government.

The colonial state realized that it had to severe the links between Eritrea and Ethiopia. However, by 1931, it could see that its efforts had been far from effective. Short of incorporating Ethiopia under Italian rule, the colonial government had few other ideas and strategies to offer.

The rapid modernization of Ethiopia in relation to Eritrea can best be illustrated by the assessment of Governor Zoli in 1930. In a detailed report he pointed out the failure of the Catholics to convert the Tigrinyans, and he thought this was particularly discouraging as the monasteries in Eritrea were seen as the hotbed of Ethiopian nationalism. Zoli concluded in the following manner:

> We have to recognize that we find ourselves in a situation that existed forty years ago. Since we have not even benefited from the modest degree of evolution which existed in the local traditional institutions, we now find ourselves in a condition of inferiority in respect to the population of Ethiopia.[67]

Another concern about Ethiopian influence was the confidence with which the Ethiopian consul carried out his duties. The process of centralization carried out by the Ethiopian state also worried the Eritrean colonial government. In April 1931, Governor Astuto informed the Ministry of Colonies that the Ethiopian consul was advising his countrymen not to join the colonial army,

as they would soon be needed in the war against Italy, a country that had refused to give back the Eritrean colony to Ethiopia.[68]

A few months earlier the Ethiopian consul at Asmara was reported to have said to the Ethiopian and Eritrean community, that if the Italians had refused to allow him to present gifts to the Eritrean monasteries, Emperor Haile Selassie would have expelled the Italian minister at Addis Abeba.[69] The Ministry of Colonies felt that the attitude of the Ethiopian consul in Eritrea was,

> evidently inspired by a premeditated programme and conducted towards a precise goal. The nationalist tendency which the Ethiopian consul reveals has undoubtedly received a clear response in Eritrea, as recently verified by the notable episodes of irredentism..[70]

'Even if these sentiments may now seem sporadic', continued the Minister, 'they ought to be considered as tendencies... which arouse in the spirit of the people notions of irredentism that lie hidden or inactive'.[71]

The rearmament of the colony begun on a modest scale in the middle of 1931, was a response to the Ethiopian government's intention to exercise a direct control over the import trade, by increasing the ad valorem tax from 8 to 40 per cent.[72] Responding to this process of centralization, the Ministry of Colonies called for an alert surveillance in order to avoid any 'disgraceful surprises'.[73]

In 1932, Italy decided to invade Ethiopia. The reasons for the Italian invasion have been studied from several perspectives and the literature is quite extensive.[74] However there have been very few attempts to explain the contributions that Ethiopian factors might have played in the decision to invade. In one of the few studies that has attempted to provide an Ethiopian dimension, it has been argued that the Italians were losing a sphere of influence and were becoming less important in the Ethiopian political economy.[75]

From the Eritrean perspective we can clearly see that the sentiments of Ethiopian nationalism aroused among the Tigrinyans by events in Ethiopia had began to preoccupy the colonial government and Rome. The Italian position was not considered as being directly threatened,and it was thought that a successful 'military intervention' would stabilize for years the Italian position in Eritrea and Ethiopia.[76]

Although the occupation of Ethiopia removed the Ethiopian threat to colonial rule in Eritrea, sentiments of Ethiopian nationalism continued to be expressed by large numbers of Eritreans who participated in the Ethiopian resistance movement.[77]

Limitations of Resistance

The threat of resistance ceased for a number of reasons to be a serious factor in the making and implementation of colonial policy. Firstly, the formal cession by Ethiopia of the Tigrinyan (Abyssinian) parts of Eritrea to Italy, through the treaty of 1900,[78] could have created the impression that Eritrea had been denied the support of Ethiopia. The evidence for such presumption, though based on the accounts of individuals appears to be sufficiently reliable and indicative of the political mood of the period. The Eritrean author of a letter drafted in 1899 to the Ethiopian emperor strongly argued that the Ethiopian emperor had the obligation to liberate all Ethiopians under foreign colonial rule.[79] The author of the letter was aware of the treaty of Wichale of 1889 as well as the treaty of 1896, which allowed the Italians to remain in the colony until the delimitation of definite boundaries.[80] It was also made clear in the letter that without the assistance of Ethiopia the Eritreans could not shake off their colonial status, which was compared to a condition of slavery worse than that experienced by the people of Israel during the reign of Titus.[81]

Slightly over a decade later, the young and versatile orientalist Johannes Kolmodin was informed while researching in Eritrea that as a result of Italo-Ethiopian treaties, the Tigrinyans (the children of Ethiopia) had become subjects of Italy.[82] Meanwhile, the Ethiopian region of Tigrai, which because of its geographical proximity was a refuge for Eritreans who fled from colonial rule, became less important as a result of internal political and social crises.[83]

The second reason was the ethnic configuration and the prevailing antagonism between various groups of people. As discussed earlier, Eritrea was inhabited by nine distinct ethnic groups, each with clearly discernible socio-economic formations.

The settled agriculturalists included the Baria, the Kunama and the Tigrinyans. The semi-pastoralist societies included the Bogos, the Tigre, and the Saho. The Beja, and the Afar peoples were predominantly pastoralists.[84] Although the demographic and economic history of the region has still to be written, a certain degree of antagonism between the various ethnic groups and their socio-economic patterns can clearly be discerned. The political organization of most of these ethnic groups provided ample grounds for antagonism. The Bogos, the Beja, the Afar and the Tigre were divided into ruling elites and serf (or vassal) castes. With the exception of the Afar, the ruling elites were originally foreigners or outsiders, who succeeded in imposing themselves on the autochthonous populations. The Saho, the Baria and the Kunama peoples lived in acephalous societies normally described as democratic or chiefless, as they lacked both chiefs and ruling castes.[85]

Among the Tigrinyans political relations were more complicated, and Tigrinyan society exhibited several feudal characteristics.[86] Aristocracy had always existed but was not hereditary as aristocratic privilege was earned through military valour. Land belonged in theory, to the Ethiopian emperor and his military prowess determined the extent of his power and authority. In practice and custom, the land belonged to the peasants. Aristocratic power rested on its ability to extract a surplus from the peasantry by various types of tribute.[87] In times of peace relations between the aristocracy (or the political elite) were generally tolerable. It naturally deteriorated during prolonged political conflicts. This was because the peasantry was expected to provide men and provisions in support of rival claimants to power.[88]

The colonial state exploited the latent contradiction between the Tigrinyan ruling elite and the peasantry by relieving the latter from the exploitation of the traditional ruling elite. The Eritrean colony was largely financed by Italy. The colonial state, therefore, was not dependent solely on taxes from the peasantry, and it could afford to impose a much less burdensome tribute payment than that which would have otherwise been imposed by the traditional ruling elite.[89] By eliminating troublesome members of the elite and by strictly controlling the remainder, the colonial state appeared to some of the Tigrinyan peasantry as a benevolent power, engaged in ending peasant exploitation.[90] This view is clearly illustrated in a number of Tigrinya poems, published in 1910, where colonialism is perceived differently by various classes and groups.

For some Eritreans, as the poem below illustrates, colonialism had a negative and far reaching impact. In the words of its anonymous author:

> Ever since the rule of a general and a colonel
> All the people of Hamassien have been exterminated.
> All the people of Tsilma and Tekela have been exterminated.
> All the people of Mai Tsada and Meraguz exterminated.
> All those from Qualla and Akele-Guzay exterminated.
> Subjected to a system of rule whose answers are
> Askut (a) and Mafish (a).
> While every Bedew (Moslem) rejoices
> Drinking honey-wine.
> Eating bread of the whitest kind.
> Every noble is being imprisoned,
> And his buttocks ruined by flogging.
> There is no medicine for his bite.
> He has exterminated and uprooted us
> May (God) do the same to him.[91]

Even if the author did not belong himself to the ruling elite, he was evidently talking on their behalf and in their defence.

For many others colonialism represented a new era, in which the peasant and the poor were not only left free, but could also enjoy the employment op-

portunities of the new colonial world. In the words of an anonymous author:

Welcome back my Lord Marrazani
Chosen by God like the fruit of holy wine
Who like intelligent eyes distinguishes good from evil.
Who does not demand services from the people.
Whose soldiers do not demand guides.
What fault can be found in the rule of Marrazani.
If God listens to my prayers,
May his territory remain under him for many years.[92]

The semi-pastoralists, i.e. the Saho, Bogos and Tigre peoples were being encroached upon in the north by the Beja and in the south by the Tigrinyans. In search of better pastures, the Beja fought against the Baria, the Kunama, the Bogos and the Tigre. The Tigrinyans, sometimes by themselves and at other times together with the Ethiopian kings, invaded the Saho, Tigre, Baria, Kunama and Bogos peoples with the twin aims of expanding their territories and of collecting tribute.[93] Colonization put an end both to Ethiopian incursions into these regions and to the intermittent conflicts between the various ethnic groups in the Eritrean lowlands.

The colonial state elicited both political and economic collaboration from the Tigre, Beja, Bilen, Afar and Kunama communities. Inhabiting ecological areas that were least favourable for colonist settlement, these communities experienced far less change as a result of colonialism than their Tigrinyan neighbours. Only slowly integrated into the market economy, through the mediation of their traditional rulers, their perception of colonialism was that of a phenomenon committed to the maintenance of law and the development of commerce.

Collaboration was easily elicited from the Tigre, Baria, Kunama, Bogos and Saho peoples for two important reasons. Firstly, the Ethiopian state considered these regions as its borderlands and therefore essential for its security. To maintain their large armies, the Ethiopian kings had institutionalized periodic raids into the borderlands as well as into the rebelling heartlands of the kingdom. By using the north and northwestern parts of Eritrea as its peripheries the Ethiopian state had deepened the feelings of alienation of these communities in relation to the kingdom. Collaboration with colonialism and the colonial administration meant, for these border regions, an end to periodical raids.[94]

Secondly, with the exception of the Saho, Baria and Kunama peoples, these communities were clearly divided into ruling elites and serf (or vassal) castes. In one of the customary codes recorded by Conti Rossini, it is specifically stated that there was no possibility by which the blood of an aristocrat could run into the veins of the serf.[95] The serfs, who repeatedly asked the colonial state to free them from their onerous obligations to their masters would cer-

tainly have rebelled against these ruling elites had the latter chosen to resist Italian rule. The demands and aspirations of the serfs were, however, not fulfilled by the Italians. While political collaboration with the Italians appeared to have satisfied interests of the ruling elites, the gains of the serfs were less significant. Although collaboration with Italian colonial rule had eliminated the threat of periodic raids by the Tigrinyans and the Ethiopian state, they remained in serf-like conditions well into the 1940's.[96]

The third limiting circumstance was Eritrean collaboration with Italian colonialism and the colonial system. For the purpose of this study, collaboration is defined as the compatibility of economic and political interests between the imperial (European) and the African political economic systems.[97] Colonialism would not have survived so successfully or for so long if there had not been a considerable amount of compatibility between its objectives and the interests of various Eritrean communities. In Eritrea, as we shall presently discuss, Italian colonialism succeeded in securing political and economic collaboration from some ethnic groups, while only receiving economic collaboration from others.

Collaboration by Eritreans with Italian colonial rule became more permanent with the steady growth of the market economy and the new economic (capitalist) opportunities organized by the colonial state. Economic collaboration was not only freely given but actively sought by Eritreans.[98] Throughout the colonial period, service in the colonial army remained the most prestigious avenue for access to the money economy. Although wages were low, they were considerably higher than those paid by the Ethiopian army.[99] During the 1911—12 campaign in Libya, the colonial government dispatched 6,000 Eritrean soldiers to the Italian war of expansion in North Africa, and this level of recruitment for war in Libya continued until the early 1930's. The overall economic impact of militarization can not be over-estimated. Taking the census of 1911 as a guide, the colonial army alone by 1914 employed about ten per cent of the productively active male population of the colony.[100] The new, military-based, economic system considerably lessened the problem of land scarcity. Those who remained in the colony had, in addition to their plots, extra land which they could cultivate by sharecropping. The additional source of income, supplementing but not yet substituting the returns of the traditional mode of production, nevertheless brought about a period of prosperity and abundance to a population with still fresh memories of the great famine of 1888—92. Imports of cotton textiles, the main item of consumption, increased from 2,400,000 lire in 1897 to 3,470,000 lire in 1905 and had reached 4,485,000 by 1910.[101]

Over the years, the growth of the colonial economy brought more and more Eritreans into the capitalist sector without, however, creating a working class entirely dependent on wages; recruitment of Eritrean soldiers for the Libyan

wars remained the predominant wealth generating sector of the colonial economy for the local population. In spite of the 1920—21 economic depression and the drastic fall of the Italian lira against Maria Theresa thaler [102], the participation of Eritreans in the capitalist sector enabled both the colonial state and the population at large to import food and thus avoid the serious consequences of famine [103]. By the same token, economic collaboration enhanced the consolidation of colonial rule.

Concluding Remarks

Resistance to colonial rule was neither widespread nor protracted. The Bahta uprising, a minor incident in itself, assumed major importance because it marked the beginning of the 1894—96 Italo-Ethiopian crisis.

The Bahta uprising and the small-scale acts of resistance were carried out mostly by Tigrinyans, who identified themselves with Ethiopia. The significance of the Bahta uprising was its Ethiopian dimension, which in itself was a constant reminder of the Italian defeat at Adwa.

From the early 1910's, the rapid growth of Italian power and its consolidation of colonial rule meant the threat of resistance became a rather remote possibility. However, both the colonial government and the authorities in Rome used the possibility of further resistance as an instrument in the curbing of colonist demands for the taking of more land and labour from the Eritreans. To take an illustrative example: In 1911 the colonial government refused to allow land confiscation in Tigrinya areas and the reason given against such confiscation measures was the fear of resistance from within Eritrea and Ethiopia. Italy used the spectre of further resistance to pursue its own priorities. One of these priorities, as discussed in chapter two, was the use of Eritrea as a reservoir of soldiers for the colonial army. The interests of the Italian authorities in Rome were at times different and contradictory when compared with those of its colonists and the colonial government in Eritrea.

The Italians were aware of the political implications of the religious loyalties between the people in Eritrea and those in Ethiopia. The colonial government took several measures to secure the allegiance of the Eritrean people to the colonial system. Thirty years of colonial rule was too short a period to affect the centuries-old cultural and religious links. Colonial goals were also greatly frustrated by the resurgence of nationalism, caused by the modernization policies of the Ethiopian state.

The colonial state and Italy were seriously worried by developments in

Ethiopia. However, the position of colonialism was far from threatened. The colonial state defused resistance by its readiness to use coercive force and also by gaining collaboration from sections of the population.

The non-Tigrinyans, the majority of whom were Moslems and inhabited peripheral areas fully collaborated with the colonial administration in exchange for peace and security. With such collaboration from the non-Tigrinyans, the colonial state was able to easily control the Eritrean political climate. On the economic front, we have argued that Eritreans readily collaborated because of the favourable impact of colonial economic policies on the material conditions of a considerable section of the population. Economic collaboration was further enhanced by the colonial state's decision not to restructure the indigenous socio-economic systems. This policy assisted the colonial state in its recruitment of Eritrean soldiers for Italian expansion elsewhere.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ruffilo Perini, *Di Qua dal Mareb*, Firenze, 1905, p. 39; Roberto Battaglia, *La prima guerra d'Africa*, Torino, 1958, p. 371.

2. According to some estimates up to a third of the entire population may have died as a result of the famine.The Great Famine started in 1888 and lasted up to 1892. See the study on the subject by Pankhurst, R., 'The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888—1892: A New Assessment', *Journal of the History of Medicine and the Allied Sciences'*, 21 (1966) Part Two, pp., 271— 94.

3. Sven Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, London, 1976, pp. 140—42, 377—78.

4. See Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, vol. 1, p. 334.

5. These areas specifically mentioned in article three of the treaty of Wichale of May 1889, were Addi Nefas, Asmara, Akrur, Segeneitti, and Halai. The treaty is exhaustively commented by Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, pp. 386—89. The Italian text of the treaty is reproduced in Carlo Rossetti, *Storia diplomatica dell'Etiopia durante il regno di Menelik II*, Torino, 1910, pp. 41—44.

6. Johannes Kolmodin, one of the earliest to record the oral history of the Tigrinyans, was told that the Italians succeeded to establish their rule because many sought their collaboration. Kolmodin, *Traditiones de Tsazzega et Hazzega*, textes Tigrinya, Roma, 1912, pp. 257—58.

7. Del Boca, A., *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, Milano, 1976, pp. 435—42; Romain Rainero, *L'anticolonialismo italiano da Assab ad Adua*, Milano, 1971, pp. 243—44. The main source of the information is Livarghi, a commander of the colonial police up to the end of 1890. Livarghi stated that his superiors were responsible for a far more

systematic genocide. See also Battaglia, *La prima guerra d'Africa*, pp. 464—66.

8. Kolmodin, *Traditiones de Tsazzega*, pp. 257—58.

9. Ibid..

10. *Relazione Generale della Reale Commissione d'Inchiesta sulla colonia Eritrea*, Roma, 1891, p. 204.

11. For the concept of resistance see G.M. Fredrickson, and C. Lasch, 'Resistance to Slavery', *Civil War History*, 13:4 (1967) pp. 315—30. The definition provided by R.H. Chilcote, *Protest and Resistance in Angola and Brazil*, Berkeley, 1972, p. 2, is too broad to be useful.

12. See Allen and Barbara Isaacman, 'Resistance and Collaboration in Southern and Central Africa, 1850—1920', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 10:1 (1977) 31—62.

13. ASMAI pos. 3/6, file 41, governor Baratieri to Rome, 18.3.1892, explaining the death of Captain Bettini and the escape of Aberra.

14. Kolmodin, *Traditiones de Tsazzega*, pp. 260—61.

15. Martini, *Il diario eritreo*, vol. 3, p. 48, for 11.7.1902.

16. Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 116—17, for 17.2.1903.

17. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 121, for 6.4.1901.

18. Ernesto Ardemani, *Tre pagine gloriose nella storia militare-civile-religiosa della colonia Eritrea*, Roma, 1901, p. 107. At the period, the author was in the nearby village and appeared to have detailed information on the event.

19. Kolmodin, *Traditiones de Tsazzega*, p. 262.

20. ASMAI pos. 3/7, file 51, Luigi Cappucci to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Addis Ababa, 15.4.1897.

21. Ibid..

22. Ardemani, *Tre pagine gloriose*, p. 94.

23. Ardemani wrote that Bahta addressed his followers on December 16. He did not, however, know the contents of the speech. Ato Mehari, an Eritrean who joined the colonial army in 1930 informed me in Rome in 1977 that Bahta had more or less presented the problem in that manner. Alberto Pollera, in *Il regime della proprietá terreirá in Etiopia e nella colonia Eritrea*, Roma 1913, p. 55, also interpreted the Bahta uprising as a response to colonial confiscation of land.

24. Ardemani, *Tre pagine gloriose*, p. 121.

25. For an exhaustive treatment of the battle of Adwa, see Battaglia, *La prima guerra d'Africa*, pp. 732—90; Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, vol. 1, Milano, 1976 pp. 649—90; Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, pp. 399—406.

26. See Raffaele Ciasca, *Storia coloniale dell'Italia contemporanea da Assab all'Impero*, Milano, 1938, pp. 195—99; Rubenson, *The Survival*, p. 406.

27. Ciasca, *Storia coloniale*, ibid.; Rossetti, *Storia diplomatica dell'Etiopia*.

28. The Ethiopian position is expressed by Rubenson, *Wichalle XVII: The Attempt to Establish a Protectorate over Ethiopia*, Addis Abeba, 1964.

29. See Rubenson, *The Survival*, p. 394.

30. Ciasca, *Storia coloniale*, p.394; Del Boca, *Gli italiani nell'Africa Orientale*, vol. 1, pp. 521—29.

31. See Rossetti, *Storia diplomatica*, pp. 181—84, for the peace treaty between Ethiopia and Italy of 20.10.1896.

32. Richard Webster, *Industrial Imperialism in Italy, 1908—1915*, Berkeley, 1975, p. 201: 'It is impossible to argue that any of these colonies (Eritrea, Somalia and Libya) could serve as an adjunct to the Italian economy, and the history of Italian expansion in Africa therefore has little interest for us here'. Names of colonies added.

33. For a survey of Italian public opinion see Del Boca, *Gli italiani nell'Africa Orientale*, vol.1, pp. 691—716; Rainero, *L'anticolonialismo italiano da Assab ad Adua*, Milano, 1971.

34. Ciasca, *Storia coloniale*, pp. 219—24.

35. Martini, *Il diario eritreo*, vol. 1, p. 2. Negotiations were secretly undertaken with the king of Belgium for the transfer of Eritrea in exchange for a reasonable compensation. See Rainero, *L'anticolonialismo italiano*, pp. 352—53; Alberto Acquarone, 'La politica coloniale italiana dopo Adua', *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, 42:1(1975) p. 363; Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1870—1925*, London, 1967, p. 184.

36. The chiefs and notables recognized by the colonial government could not be arrested without the prior consent of the district officer. See ordinamento della diustizia nella colonia Eritrea of 28.7.1908 published in *Gazzetta Uffeciale* 4.7.1908. This was restated in Ordinamento organico per L'Eritrea e la Somalia, R.D. 6.7.1933, no. 999, article 35.

37. Gino Bartolommei-Gioli, 'La colonizzazione agricola dell'Eritrea', *Bollettino del emigrazione*, 16 (1906) pp. 248—49.

38. The main aspect of colonial policy that emerges from the diaries of Martini was not only to defuse resistance inside Eritrea, but also to develop peaceful coexistence with Ethiopia.

39. In 1911 the colonial government expropriated some of the land of two villages for public use. 'If we were to evict the villagers without giving them comparable land in the vicinity', argued governor Salvago-Raggi, 'we would open ourselves to a new wave of accusations which could arouse a new movement in the colony as well as outside the country'. For the political security of the colony, Salvago-Raggi decided to expropriate the property of four Italian settlers and give these to the villagers as compensation. See ASMAI, pos.11/8 file 73, Salvago-Raggi to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11.6.1911.

40. See Chapter Two above.

41. Ethiopia was ruled by Lijj Eyassu, a young crown prince, from 1913 until his overthrowal in 1916. For a brief study on Eyassu, see Harold Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia, 1844—1913*, Oxford, 1975, pp. 249—81.

42. ASMAI, pos. 3/22 file 180, Situazione politica dal 6 al 13 Maggio, 1914; pos. 3/23, file 200, 20.1.1915.

43. ASMAE AA. PP. 1025/3038, governor Gasparini to MC, 23.6.1924.

44. The subversive role of the Swedish mission surfaced again in 1926 where the colonial state obliged the mission to limit its education to purely religious matters. The relations between the Swedish Evangelical mission in Eritrea with that of Ethiopia was described as 'Undoubtedly against Italian policy in Ethiopia'. ASMAE, serie politici: Eritrea 1919—1930, pacco 1015 file 2891, Gasparini to MC, 30.11.1926. In June 1932 all the Swedish mission schools in Eritrea were closed down. See Cesare Marongiu Buonaiuti, *Politica e religioni nel colonialismo italiano, 1882—1941*, Varese, 1982, p. 207.

45. Buonaiuti, *Politica e religioni*, p. 161.

46. Ibid., p. 176.

47. Ibid., p. 172.

48. ASMAI pos. 54/30, file 118, governor Zoli to MC Asmara, 15.7.1929.

49. Ibid..

50. Bounaiuti, *Politica e religioni nel colonialismo italiano*, p. 176.

51. Ibid., pp. 194, 196.

52. Ibid., pp. 33—38.

53. ASMAI pos. 54/30, file 118, governor Zoli to MC, Asmara, 15.7.1929.

54. Da Nembro, M., *La missione dei minori cappuccini in Eritrea, 1894—1952*, Roma, 1953.

55. Ibid., p. 83.

56. Ibid., p. 35.

57. Ibid., p. 117.

58. Ibid..

59. Ibid..

60. Ibid..

61. ASMAI pos. 54/30, file 118, Zoli to MC 15.7.1929.

62. Between 1890 and 1891 about 1,000 Catholics were expelled by the rulers of northern Ethiopia. These were accepted by the colonial state in Eritrea and settled in the villages of Menekusito and Halhale. See Da Nembro, *La missione dei minori cappuccini*, pp. 38—40. Governor Zoli who by no means was anticlerical commented that the progress of Catholicism was too slow to severe the links between Eritrea and Ethiopia. He reminded the Minister of Colonies that if the Catholic mission proceeded with such pace, it would take 2,300 years to convert the entire population. ASMAI pos. 54/30, file 118, Zoli to MC Asmara, 15.7.1929.

63. ASMAI, pos. 54/30 file 118, Minister of Colonies De Bono to Governor Zoli, 6.11.1929 on the need for more assistance to the Catholic Mission in Eritrea.

64. Da Nembro did not point out lack of support as a cause affecting the Catholic Mission.

65. ASMAE AA. PP. Etiopia, busta 4, file 3, De Bono to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 13.2.1931.

66. ASMAE AA. PP. busta 4, file 3, governor Astuto to MC, Asmara 14.4.1931; 19.5.1931. Although 1932 is considered as the period when Italy decided to invade Ethiopia, studies on the military preparedness of the colony both for offensive and defensive purposes were conducted as early as 1926. See Rochat, G., *Militari e politici nella preparazione della campagna d'Etiopia, 1932—36*, Milano, 1971 p. 22; Ministero della Guerra, *La campagna 1935—36 in Africa Orientale, vol. 1: La Preparazione militare*, Roma, 1939, pp. 80—101.

67. ASMAE serie politici, pacco 1015, file 2901, Zoli to MC Asmara, 30.6.1930, p. 8. Zoli was defending his new agricultural policy where he set aside 5,000 hectares in areas which were not claimed by the Tigrinyan peasants. He was also defending himself against allegations from the Italian Legation in Addis Abeba accusing him of land confiscation and harsh treatment of the natives. He concluded his provokingly composed dispatch by reminding his superiors that, 'we ought to be guided by the spirit of our regime and not by the spirit of the recently deceased F. Martini', ibid., p. 10.

68. ASMAI pos. 54/31, file 124, governor Astuto to MC, Asmara 20.7.1931.

69: ASMAE AA. PP, busta 4, file 3, governor Astuto to MC, 14.4.1931.

70. ASMAE AA.PP. Etiopia, busta 4, file 3, the Minister of Colonies to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome, 15.1.1931.

71. Ibid..

72. ASMAE AA. PP., Etiopia, busta 4, file 3, MC to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28.12.1931.

73. Ibid..

74. Crisis of Italian economy as a motive for invasion, see George Baer, *The Coming of the Italo-Ethiopian War*, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1967, p. 31; Giorgio Rochat, *Militari e politici*, p. 105. Idem., *Il colonialismo italiano*, Torino, 1975. Prestige as a motive see Federico Chabod, *L'Italia contemporanea, 1918—1948*, p. 91. For the primacy of European diplomacy see De Felice, R., *Mussolini il Duce: Gli anni del consenso, 1929—1936*, Milano, 1974, pp. 613—52.

75. Marcus, H., 'The Infrastructure of the Italo-Ethiopian Crises: Haile Selassie, the Solomonic Empire and the World Economy, 1916—1936', *Proceedings of the fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies*, Chicago, 1978 (1980), p. 563.

76. On the basis of the few pieces of evidence but hitherto not examined, it is possible to argue that there were two reasons for Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Firstly, the need to establish a secure hinterland for Eritrea. This hinterland which, according to the tripartite treaty of 1906 between Italy, France and Britain, included northern Ethiopia up to the sources of the Blue Nile, was progressively eroded by the process of centralization introduced by the Ethiopian monarch. Secondly, the desire to put an end to the vague and sporadic episodes of sentiments of nationalism by putting Ethiopia under Italian rule through a successful military intervention.

77. For a fuller account of the role of Eritreans in the Ethiopian anti-Italian resistance movement, see my 'Pax Italica and its Ethiopian Enemies' in *Notes on Resistance and Nationalism in Eritrea, 1890—1940*, Uppsala, 1986, pp. 36—48.

78. Through the Italo-Ethiopian treaty of May 1900, Italy was allowed to keep Eritrea in exchange for a lump sum compensation of five million lire. Commenting on the treaty, Perini (alias Gabre Negus) wrote that Italy ended up with more territory than it expected to get from the Ethiopian emperor. Gabre Negus, 'Eritrea e i suoi nuovi confini', *Rivista Moderna*, 6 (1902), p. 106.

79. The letter available in draft form in AE pacco 935, has been fully discussed in my 'Blatta Gebre Egziabeher and his works', in *Notes on Resistance and Nationalism in Eritrea*, pp. 1—16.

80. Ibid., p. 11.

81. Ibid., p. 12.

82. Kolmodin, *Traditiones de Tsazzaga*, p. 263.

83. On the social and political crisis see Tafla, B., 'Political Crisis in Tigrai, 1889—1899', *Africa* (Rome) 34:1 (1979), pp. 105—28.

84. See pp. 5—8.

85. See pp. 5—8.

86. Cf. Ellis, G., 'The Feudal Paradigm as a Hindrance to Understanding Ethiopia', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14:2 (1976), pp. 275—95.

87. See my 'Land Tenure and the Organization of Surplus on the eve of the colonial period', in *Notes on Resistance and Nationalism*, pp. 22—36.

88. See Rubenson, *The Survival*, pp. 318—26.

89. See Piccioli, A., *La nuova Italia d'oltremare*, vol. 2, p. 1441 on the powers of the Governor to increase or reduce tribute by one third according to the circumstances in the colony.

90. Kolmodin, *Traditiones de Tsazzega*, p. 257.

91. Faitlovitch, J., *Versi Abissini: Testo Tigrigna*, Roma, 1910, pp. 16—17.

92. Ibid., p. 18.

93. For the relations between the Tigrinyans and the other ethnic groups in the lowlands in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Munzinger, *Sull'Africa Orientale*, pp. 20—39.

94. During one of his visits to the Baria, the Kunama and the Beni Amir, governor Martini wrote about them: 'I feel that their obedience is more devout, their greeting more cordial and their respect more firm. I feel that they realize the benefits of our administration; they have no ambitious hopes for desiring or wanting another government'. *Il diario eritreo*, vol.3, p. 79, for 15.12.1905. Martini was also told by one of the Beni Amer elders: 'We have tried the Egyptians and the Abyssinians. But only now do we feel secure that our belongings and our women are ours', Ferdinando Martini, 'L'Italia e l'Eritrea', in *L'Eritrea Economica*, Novara, 1913, p. 12.

95. Conti Rossini, C., *I principi di diritto consuetudinario dell'Eritrea*, Roma, 1916, p. 637.

96. S. J. Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, London, 1952, pp. 167—68.

97. I am greatly indebted to Roland Robinson's thesis where he argued that European economic and strategic expansion could not have taken imperial form, had it not been for the existence of grounds for collaboration between Europe and the non-European political economies. 'Non European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch

for a theory of Collaboration', in Roger Owen, and Bob Sutcliffe, eds., *Studies on the Theory of Imperialism*, London, 1972, p. 120.

98. Free from forced labour, the Eritreans exercised considerable control over the extent and nature of economic collaboration. In the rare cases of shortages of labour caused by military recruitment, the colonial state resorted to the importation of foreign labour rather than forced labour. See for instance Dante Odorizzi, 'Della mano d'opera nelle nostre colonie (Eritrea)', *Atti del primo congress degli italiani all'estero*, Roma, vol. 2, p. 1651.

99. Martini, *Il diario*, vol. 2, p. 128, for 11.4.1900. Daily wages for colonial soldiers were reduced from 1.50 lire to 1.00 lire by Martini himself.

100. See Chapter Two above.

101. Checchi, M., *Movimento commerciale della colonia Eritrea, 1885—1910*, Roma, 1912, p. 8.

102. See appendix II.

103. See pp. 153—54 below.

CHAPTER SIX

COLONIAL IMPACT ON ERITREAN SOCIETY

In 1941 Italy lost its African Empire to the Allies which marked the end of Italian colonialism in Eritrea. As victors, the British assumed political responsibility for the territory on behalf of the Allies and this lasted until the end of the war. The defeat of Italy did not, however, mean the sudden and complete replacement of Italy by Britain. The British were not interested in making the task of administration more difficult or expensive by dismantling the Italian colonial system. Furthermore, the Italian colonial system as well as the many Italians appeared so deeply entrenched that the British, understaffed and underbudgeted, found it suitable to rule Eritrea through the Italian colonial administration.[1]

The Italian population of 60,000 remained constant until the end of the war due to problems of repatriation. Paradoxically enough, between 1941 and 1946 Italian participation in the economy of Eritrea intensified to a degree which previously would have been unimaginable. This was due to the extraordinary conditions created by the war when the abundant Italian manpower and capital equipment available in the colony were used in the establishment of many light industries geared for export to the Middle East.[2] The history of Eritrean light industries, which by 1970 constituted 35 per cent of Ethiopian industry originated in the British rather than in the Italian period.[3]

The continuance of important aspects of the Italian colonial system after 1941 together with the new British colonial imprint has given rise to a methodological problem of how to confront the question of the impact of Italian colonialism on Eritrean society. The Italian colonial impact cannot be studied in the same manner as, for instance, of that of Britain in Kenya. Whereas British colonialism ended with Kenyan independence, Italian colonialism ended in the substitution of one foreign power by another. Moreover, the discussion on colonial impact is based on a few selected themes that can be answered by the source material, i.e. colonial archival and published sources. A more exhaustive study would have required a broader anthropological background as well as a considerable period of fieldwork. This methodological hurdle notwithstanding, it is extremely important to attempt

to assess the nature of Italian colonialism as well as to explain some aspects of post-1945 Eritrean history.

I have chosen to study the Italian impact in the following manner. Under the heading *Objective Impact*, I shall discuss in a summary form the social and economic changes during the colonial period. This is followed by a discussion of the Italian colonial impact on Eritrean national consciousness. The organizing question is framed as follows. Had the Italians not been replaced by the British, what would their impact have been on Eritrean national consciousness? As the question is hypothetical, the counter-factual argument should not be over-stated, otherwise it detracts from its scientific value.[4]

State of Research

The impact of Italian and British colonialism on Eritrean society have been investigated by several authors. The developmental anthropologist Jordan Gebre Medhin has argued that, 'the impact of Italian colonialism on the transformation of Eritrean rural life was felt by the end of the Second World War'.[5] To substantiate his conclusion the author argued that the alienation of nearly one half of all available land, together with the introduction of commercial agriculture, hastened the disintegration of feudal structures in Eritrean rural society.[6] As I have discussed elsewhere, the author's interpretation of Italian colonial impact can not be empirically substantiated.[7] Alienation of land, to which the author attached great importance, was less than 1 per cent of cultivated land — an insignificant amount when compared with the experience of some British colonies in East and Southern Africa.[8] Contrary to what the author claimed, Italian colonialism did not hasten the disintegration of feudal structures, which in fact continued to prevail up to the mid 1970's — as can be illustrated by the few available studies on the subject.[9]

Another author who also argued in terms of a causal relationship between European colonization and the development of national consciousness is the political scientist Richard Leonard. In his study, European Colonization and the Socio-economic integration of Eritrea, Leonard centred his arguments around two main points. Firstly, he assumed that the imposition of capitalist economic activities on the various social and ethnic groups in the colony had constituted the material basis of integration. Secondly, that the imposition of these capitalist activities during a period of 63 years of colonialism had profoundly influenced economic, social and political changes.[10] Leonard does not make the distinction between Italian colonialism (1890—1941) and the

British Military Administration of 1941—52, when Eritrea was juridically at least not a colony.[11]

In the first part of the essay Leonard discussed economic changes and their impact on the social structure such as the peasantry, the working class and the petty bourgeoisie. However, his discussion of colonial activities in general, and Italian activities in particular, leave a great deal to be desired. Presumably in an effort to demonstrate the continuity of European colonial economic activities, Leonard depicted the 1900—35 period in a far more favourable light than did Italian economic historians of the period. Two examples can be cited. Leonard wrote that fundamental agricultural development was carried out in the 1920's without however attempting to substantiate his claim. As archival and other contemporary Italian published sources illustrate, Italian activity in the agricultural domain was virtually non-existent.[12] Leonard also wrote about the 'extension of light industry in the 1920's calling forth further developments in the economic infrastructure', in spite of the fact that one of his sources states clearly that there was hardly any industry in Eritrea prior to 1935.[13]

On the effects of European colonization on social structures, Leonard emphasized that the peasantry decreased from (presumably) one hundred per cent on the eve of the colonial period to 80 per cent of the population by the early 1950's and he attributes this to the effects of European colonization.[14] The author concluded that European colonization brought major socio-economic changes and these in turn, were the reasons for integration.[15]

Before analysing the second part of Leonard's essay, it need be pointed out that his discussions of socio-economic changes are based on a number of assumptions and estimates from which it is difficult to draw serious conclusions. To take only one example: Leonard estimated that the Eritrean working class, created by colonialism amounted to 5 per cent of the population. Apart from the fact that the author did not deem it necessary to document at which point in the colonial period he estimated the existence of a 5 per cent working class, he did not specify whether the 5 per cent were of the total population or of the productively active section of the population.[16]

It is in the second part of the essay, however, that the author's analysis needs to be reassessed. This is because the political developments of the 1940's, even in the manner described by Leonard as I shall presently discuss, had very little to do with the socio-economic changes brought about by European colonial rule.

On the basis of the election result of 1948 where 52 per cent of the Eritrean population according to Leonard expressed a desire for independence, he argued that the unity of the parties demanding independence was an expression of the socio-economic changes created by European colonialism.[17] The author did not analyse the composition of the 52 per cent who as he alleges

voted for independence or that of the remaining 48 per cent of the population who desired an unconditional union with Ethiopia.[18]

Although the author was limited by the lack of accessible sources for the Italian period, his ready reliance on general statistical material seems also to be linked to his less than critical use of a theoretical framework. Convinced that the imposition of colonial capitalist activities created profound socio-economic changes, Leonard took the election result of 1948 as confirming the causal connection between colonialism and nationalism. Even though it might be conceded, as a theoretical construct, that colonial capitalist activities produce profound socio-economic changes, it does not necessarily follow in reality that colonialism brought about profound changes and shaped Eritrean nationalism. Not only do we require many more systematic studies on the Italian and British periods but even the readily available sources do not support Leonard's argumentation.

If colonialism had any effect on national consciousness, the result of the 1948 elections ought to have been entirely different. The Tigrinyans, who constituted the majority of the working class, the educated elite, the petty bourgeoisie and public employees would have opted for independence.[19] Instead, the Tigrinyan people campaigned for an unconditional union with Ethiopia and against the emergence of Eritrea as an independent state. Independence was not argued, as Leonard would have desired, by those sections of the population greatly affected by colonialism. The political struggle of the late 1940's was dictated by the ideological perceptions of reality (where regionalism and religion predominated) rather than by those material conditions fashioned by colonialism.[20]

The issue of Italian colonial impact has also been dealt with by professor Irma Taddia. In her latest publication the author concentrated on the Eritrean highlands and their agrarian civilization, as this region 'constituted the nucleus of social and economic transformations imposed by colonialism'.[21] The other ethnic groups and their economic structures were not studied because of their 'secondary role in the political economy of colonialism'.[22] Working from a methodological assumption that a study of colonialism requires a precise knowledge of the present, the author defined the parameters of her study when she wrote that 'the context of the demand for Eritrean independence can be explained by the social and structural transformations brought about during the colonial period'.[23]

Professor Taddia's study, although an invaluable source on Eritrean colonial society, does not clearly explain the social and structural transformations brought about by colonialism, while their impact on the political domain is completely left out. In a chapter devoted to the colonial process, Professor Taddia's analysis of peasant differentiation caused by colonial land alienation and the expansion of village or communal land holding systems at the expense

of kinship possession was of too limited scale to be presented as evidence of social and structural transformations.[24] Furthermore, villages where land was not alienated had to accommodate other peasants whose land had been confiscated.[25]

The colonial administration expanded the communal form of land-use while suppressing kinship ownership of land and this policy hindered the evolution of private forms of land ownership. To the extent that the Italians 'transformed' the structures of production, their impact was to tie the peasant more firmly to the land.[26] The colonial impact, as we shall presently discuss, was not powerful enough to transform social and production relations, and it also was not in any way connected to the political struggle of the 1940's.[27]

Objective Colonial Impact

Setting new demographic balance

According to the census of 1893, the population of Eritrea was estimated to be 191,127.[28] The name census was attached to what really was an estimate. From 1905 until the year of the last census of 1939, a total of seven censuses were carried out. What is remarkable about all these censuses, as can be glanced from the table 6.1 below, is their consistency.

Table 6.1. The growth of the population.

Year of census	Population
1905	274,944
1911	333,431
1917	367,239
1921	407,377
1927	519,175
1931	596,013
1939	614,353

Source: The census figures for 1911, 1917, 1921 and 1927 are derived from Istituto Agricolo Coloniale, L'Economia Eritrea, Firenze, 1932, pp. 43—44. For the rest see Vittorio Castellano, 'Il censimento del 1939', p. 272.

That the Eritrean population more than doubled between 1905 and 1939 has nothing extraordinary about it.[29] What is most striking are the different rates of growth that the various ethnic groups experienced during the period. In the census of 1905 there were 112,931 Tigrinyans out of a total population of 274,944.[30] The language spoken is also a rough guide to the religious

background, with the majority of the population speaking other languages than Tigrinya also professing Islam. The census of 1931 showed the gap closing towards parity between the two religions and this means that the Tigrinyans were increasing at a faster rate than the rest of the population. In 1939, the year of the last colonial census, 332,763 of 614,353, or 54.2 per cent of the population, spoke Tigrinya as their mother tongue. In terms of religion the population was divided as shown in table 6.2.

Although the Tigrinya-speaking ethnic group from the outset constituted the single largest group, its position of dominance which was less discernible in 1905 had increased considerably by the late 1930's. Table 6.3. illustrates population growth of the various ethnic groups from 1905 to 1939.

The impact of Italian colonialism was more strongly felt among settled communities than among the pastoral and semi-pastoralist ones, and this accounts for the rapid population increase of the Tigrinyans.[32] The huge disparity in size between ethnic groups had decisive political consequences in the late 1940's.[33] Even during the colonial period the increasing pressure for land in the Tigrinya speaking regions (which constituted at most 20 per cent of the area) had pushed the younger generations to seek their fortune in the less populated and formerly non-Tigrinyan regions of the colony. The Tigrinyans were spilling over into lands previously exploited by pastoralists and semi-pastoralists, and thus in effect pushing the frontiers of Tigrinya culture.

Table 6.2. Population distribution by religion.

	1905	1931	1939
Moslems	152,000	312,000	293,000
Christians	110,000	280,000	317,000[31]

Source: Castellano, 'Il censimento del 1939', p. 278.

Table 6.3. Population growth by ethnic origin, 1905—39.

Ethnic Groups	1905	1931	1939
Tigrinyans	112,931	289,994	332,763
Tigre(a)	65,517	113,050	91,914
Beja	34,021	68,155	47,009
Bogos	14,283	24,466	33,802
Saho	16,682	41,170	32,168
Baria	5,531	9,749	10,502
Kunama	13,683	15,426	19,153
Afar	8,951	21,679	30,950
Total	274,944	596,013	614,353.

(a) This includes the Tigre-speaking ethnic groups, i.e. the Habab, the Marya, and the Mensa.

Source: Castellano, 'Il censimento del 1939', p. 277.

Seen from the perspectives of the 1940's, when political programmes and alignments were determined primarily by ethnicity, the political result of the dramatic population growth among the Tigrinyans (who formed 35 per cent in 1905 rising to 54 per cent by 1939) was the fact that the fate of the colony could hardly be decided without their consent. The outcome of the elections of 1948, we can argue, were to a large extent determined by ethnicity. And the Tigrinyans, in spite of the impact of colonialism did not support independence.[34]

Political stability and growth of material well-being

The failure of the policy of Italian settlement led to the new role of the colony firstly as a centre of trade and secondly as a reservoir of soldiers for the colonial army. These subsequent roles called for a policy of political stability, which was effected without great difficulty and expense. Trading colonies generally did not require a radical restructuring of their 'traditional' or precolonial economic system. In the case of Eritrea, the desire for radical restructuring was hampered by the scarcity of Italian capital. During the 1900—40 period the main objective of the colonial government was to run the colony as inexpensively as possible, or in other words, to maintain political stability. Issues which were likely to cause political instability were anticipated and measures were taken to pre-empt them. In the process of stabilization, the colonial government utilized the ethnic diversity of the colony and the various Eritrean attitudes towards the colonial system. The Tigrinyans were the only group who, on the basis of a diffuse but nevertheless real notion of Ethiopian nationalism, could really challenge Italian colonialism. The threat of Tigrinyan resistance, as previously discussed was reduced by a policy of meticulous preservation of the precolonial socio-political structures.

As in other African colonies the first four decades of this century were characterized by political stability which in effect meant that there was minimal resistance to colonial rule. In the African historiography of the 1960's and 1970's, this long period has been described as 'the age of improvement'.[35]

Although colonial rule rested on the threatened use of the forces of colonial power, the new order set in motion a period of political stability both for the individual as well as for the various ethnic groups, who owing to their size or geographical position were threatened by stronger groups. The rules and the

parameters of the colonial system vis-à-vis the inhabitants were clearly understood and well articulated, and appear to have been accepted by the great majority of the inhabitants. As Italy developed a stronger awareness of the strategic role of Eritrea as a staging post for colonial expansion into Ethiopia, it found it to be in its interest to maintain political stability.

The first four decades of this century, by what ever we adopt to study them, were markedly different when compared to the last four decades of the nineteenth century. Because of its foreign origin and its limited objectives, the colonial state was in a position to dictate the terms of a political order, and political stability was the main precondition. Inter-clan and inter-ethnic disputes were resolved partly by the superior fiat of the colonial state and partly according to its own interpretations of customary jurisprudence. Precolonial political structures were maintained although in greatly compromised form. The privileges of ruling castes were virtually left untouched.[36] Pax colonica resembled the perfection of the traditional system without the recourse to traditional methods of resolving conflicts, which the colonial government now appropriated for itself.

Political stability did not evolve from the natural interaction of Eritrean inhabitants, but instead, was imposed from above. Put cynically, the Eritreans did not have to work out for themselves the formulae for political stability since the colonial state did the job for them. This was all the more so as the political autonomy of Eritrea was never contemplated by the colonial state. Despite colonial concern with political stability, the first four decades of this century witnessed hardly any serious breakdown of security. This made it possible for a generation of Eritreans to grow up under pax colonica with only the relatively impartial imperial power to contend with.

The impact of this political stability imposed by the colonial state can not be underestimated. Given the strategical rather than the economical importance of Eritrea, the colonial state found it preferable to co-opt the indigenous ruling elites in the task of maintaining and perpetuating political stability. Aside from the ruling elites however, the real beneficiaries of the new order were the rank and file who, although still ruled by their traditional chiefs, could nevertheless exploit it to their own advantage. Loss of independence was the price paid by the Eritreans as a whole for the political stability dictated and established by the colonial state. But political independence meant much more to the indigenous ruling elite than to the peasantry, whose prime interest was the maintenance of political and economic stability.[37]

The material well-being of the Eritrean population as a whole, also constitutes another objective impact. This was a consequence of the political stability discussed above and partly due to the innovations introduced during the colonial period. It is worthwhile to stress that the discussion of the material welfare of Eritreans is not based on a structural analysis of economic relations

between the periphery and Italy or through a study of such mechanisms as unequal exchange.[38] The discussion is based purely on an arithmetical calculation of changes in the growth of trade and the availability of essential material goods as well as goods for conspicuous consumption.

The argument for an enhanced material well-being among Eritreans is made on two grounds. Firstly, the colonial period witnessed a discernible betterment in the conditions of life of the ordinary population, and secondly, this greater material well-being came about in spite of the exploitation of the colony through unequal terms of trade.[39] In order to demonstrate the improvement in the material welfare, we shall, in addition to the dramatic population growth which can be interpreted as a result of economic security, concentrate on the growth in trade and consumption of goods, together with the spread of the money economy.

Throughout the colonial period, the dominant import were cotton textiles. Imports of cotton textiles increased from 2,400,000 lire in 1897 to 3,470,000 lire in 1905 and reached 4,485,000 lire in 1910.[40] Between 1922 and 1932 imports of cotton textiles increased dramatically and overshadowed all other imports. As table 6.4. illustrates the cotton textile expansion leaves little room for doubt, as the colonial economic historian Fernando Santagata commented, about the increased purchasing capability of the Eritrean people.

Another cause of the expansion of material welfare was the opportunity created by the export oriented economy to avoid the serious consequences of famine, through food imports in exchange for export goods. Never self-sufficient in food production, Eritrea managed to offset food shortages by resorting to overseas as well as towards Ethiopian markets. Given the increase in the population, the size of the manpower engaged in the modern sector and that employed by the colonial government, there appears to have been sufficient currency available to allow for an increase in the volume of food imported during those years of bad harvest.[41]

Finally, we can assess the spread of the capitalist sector and Eritrean participation in the new system. As argued in chapter two, considerable legal and extra-legal constraints were imposed on the inhabitants of the colony. Although colonial native policy sought to confine Eritreans to the precolonial

Table 6.4. Imports of selected consumption goods, 1922 to 1930, in thousands of lire.

Imported goods	1922	1924	1926	1928	1930
cotton textiles	40,908	62,376	67,403	63,170	58,052
sorghum	1,243	2,157	5,003	9,476	4,738
sugar	2,000	3,326	5,406	6,109	
perfumes	1,106	1,355	998	1,213	1,316
other grains	64	350	436	6,578	7,287

Source: Santagata, La colonia Eritrea, 1935, p.141.

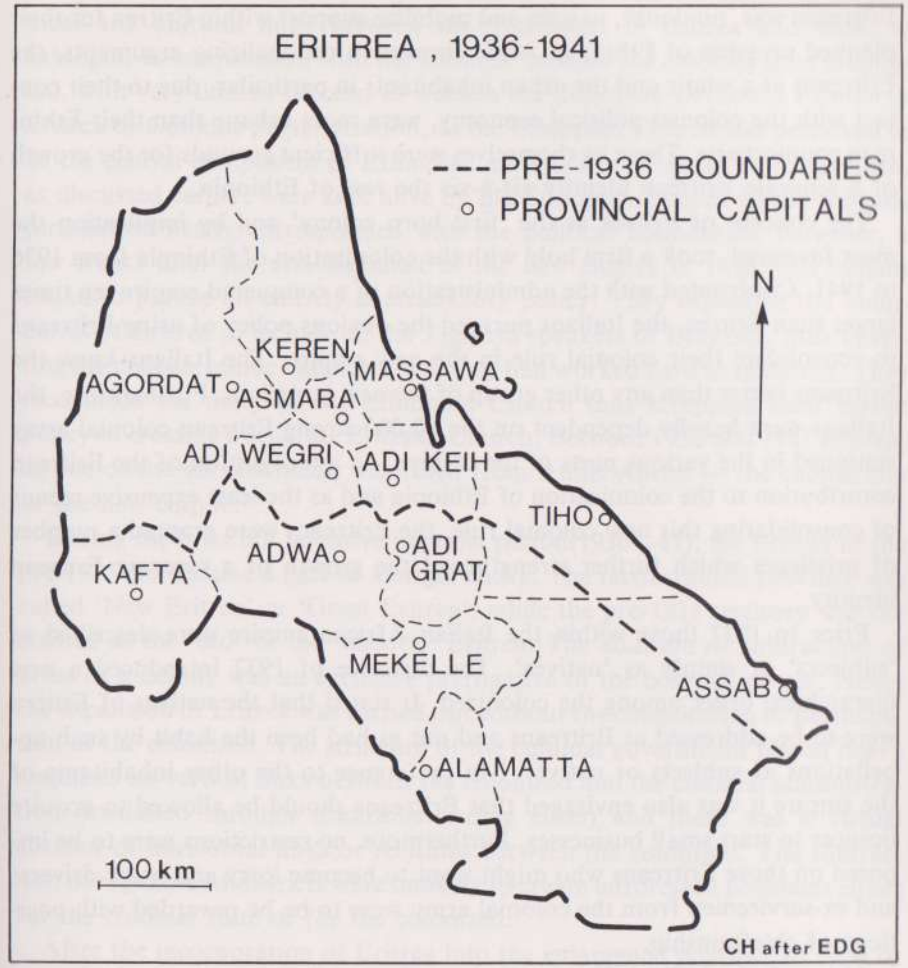
system, the spread of the capitalist sector continued, albeit slowly and unevenly. The colonial government remained the largest employer, financing a colonial army whose size varied according to the exigencies of the period. In the absence of precise information about the labour history of the colony, we can only use approximations based on fragmented and disparate sources. As the demand for colonial soldiers coincided with the construction of the Massawa—Asmara railroad, the 1912—20 period witnessed a great demand for labour and this led to an economic boom on an unprecedented scale.[42] In any given year from 1912 to 1930, the modern sector(including the colonial army) absorbed between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of the active labour force in the colony.[43]

Wages varied widely and rates of pay largely depended on geographical location, sex and skill. The ratio between Italian and Eritrean labour was in the range 7:1 throughout the colonial period.[44] The difference, on the other hand, between skilled Italian and Eritrean labour was as low as 3:1 during the 1910—1930 period.[45] The spread of the capitalist (or modern) sector explains the continued growth of imports of consumption goods. The dramatic ten-fold increase of the volume and in value of imported cotton textiles can hardly be explained in any other way.

Evolution of an Eritrean identity

Ever since Eritrea became a reservoir of manpower for the colonial army, a special attachment developed between Italy and Eritrea. Described as the first born colony, (*la colonia primogenita*), Eritrea after 1900, as we argued earlier, did not seriously challenge colonial rule. This was largely because of the coercive apparatus of the colonial power,the implementation of a rational native policy and the cultural and ethnic diversity of Eritrea, which made it possible for Italy to maintain its rule without having to flex its muscles. For those smaller ethnic groups threatened by more powerful ones, Italian colonial rule was perceived as an impartial phenomenon committed to law, order and development.[46] Through the praxis of meticulous respect for religious liberty, which in effect meant the elevation of Islam to a level of parity with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the colonial state gained the support of those ethnic groups which professed Islam.[47]

By the 1930's the majority of Eritreans had grown up in a colonial political and economic system which was markedly different from the rest of Ethiopia. Throughout the colonial period Ethiopia was treated as the hinterland of Eritrea. The Eritreans were better clothed, enjoyed a greater consumption of



Map 4. Eritrea, 1936—1941.

goods, and had access to a way of life considered superior, as well as greater access to the benefits of modern, albeit extremely limited, schooling, than that enjoyed by their Ethiopian counterparts.[48] Ethiopia, as the Eritrean hinterland, was persistently described as a society which fell far below the standard achieved in Eritrea. The growing gap between the socio-economic realities of Eritrean life and those of Ethiopia was first pointed out at the beginning of the 1900's, and by the 1930's they were too noticeable not to elicit comment.[49] At the beginning of the 1930's Eritrea with its urban centres, its considerable wage earning population combined with an increased purchasing power was considered as more developed (or in the colonial parlance as more civilized) than the rest of Ethiopia.[50]

The main aim of the Italians in concentrating on the material well-being of Eritreans was, no doubt, to gain and mobilize support within Eritrea for their planned invasion of Ethiopia. Aside from such rationalizing arguments, the Eritreans as a whole and the urban inhabitants in particular, due to their contact with the colonial political economy, were more urbane than their Ethiopian counterparts. These by themselves were sufficient grounds for the growth of a separate Eritrean identity vis-à-vis the rest of Ethiopia.

The concept of Eritrea as the 'first born colony' and by implication the most favoured, took a firm hold with the colonization of Ethiopia from 1936 to 1941. Confronted with the administration of a conquered empire ten times larger than Eritrea, the Italians pursued the obvious policy of using Eritreans to consolidate their colonial rule in the new empire. The Italians knew the Eritreans better than any other group of the new imperium. Furthermore, the Italians were heavily dependent on the 60,000 strong Eritrean colonial army stationed in the various parts of the empire. As a recognition of the Eritrean contribution to the colonization of Ethiopia and as the least expensive means of consolidating this new colonial rule, the Eritreans were granted a number of privileges which further strengthened the growth of a separate Eritrean identity.

Prior to 1937 those within the Italian African empire were described as 'subjects' or simply as 'natives'. The directive of 1937 introduced a new hierarchical order among the colonized. It stated that the natives of Eritrea were to be addressed as Eritreans and not as had been the habit by such appellations as subjects or natives.[51] In preference to the other inhabitants of the empire it was also envisaged that Eritreans should be allowed to acquire licences to start small businesses. Furthermore, no restrictions were to be imposed on those Eritreans who might want to become lorry and truck drivers; and ex-servicemen from the colonial army were to be be rewarded with positions of chieftainship.

Although the Italian African empire collapsed four years later, the impact of the co-option of Eritreans in the colonial system, and its consequent repercussions for Eritrean identity, was to remain considerable. After 55 years of separate existence, the lumping together of Eritrea into the newly created empire was bound to put into relief the existence of a separate identity. The Italians sharpened the contours of this separate identity by elevating the Eritreans to the highest position in the colonial hierarchy. They distinguished Eritreans from the rest by awarding them various economic privileges that were, no doubt, designed to facilitate the policy of divide and rule. The effect was, nonetheless, an inchoate feeling of a separate identity which can rightly be identified as Eritrean.[52]

It is worthwhile to point out that the Italians did not attach any importance to the evolution and development of a distinct or separate Eritrean identity.

Prior to 1935 their colonial policy was aimed exclusively at weakening the political and cultural links between the Tigrinyans in Eritrea and those in Ethiopia. In conjunction with the Catholic mission the colonial state attempted, with very limited success, to weaken the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Eritrea by Catholic proselytization, as the Ethiopian Church was perceived to be the central component of Ethiopian nationalism. Feelings of irredentism, as discussed earlier, were kept alive by the Ethiopian Church whose spiritual jurisdiction neatly corresponded with the political boundaries. However, a few weeks after the establishment of the new empire in 1936, the Italians began to pursue an entirely contradictory policy. They expanded the boundaries of Eritrea to include all the Tigrinya speakers of Ethiopia, thus upsetting the delicate ethnic balance which they had worked hard to maintain. They recognized the unity of the Ethiopian Church thus scrapping their earlier policy of creating a separate Eritrean Church. Between 1936 and 1941 Eritrea, as one of the six provinces, was ruled from Addis Abeba — the capital city of the new empire.

During the brief but intensive imperial period(1936—41), the Eritrea of the pre-1935 era became a part of a larger entity. The reconstituted province was called 'New Eritrea' or 'Great Eritrea', while the pre-1935 territory was described as the 'old' or the 'historic' Eritrea. The addition or subtraction of areas of a colony was an exclusive prerogative of the colonial power. Hence the expansion of Eritrea was carried out without the consultation or participation of the colonized. The structure of the colonial government placed heavy emphasis on vertical links between the colonized and the colonial administration (mediated through traditional ruling elites) and there was a virtual absence of horizontal links or relations between the colonized. The subtraction of regions and districts were unlikely to create unforeseen problems either for the colonial state or for the colonized.

After the incorporation of Eritrea into the enlargened province of New or Great Eritrea as one of the six provinces of the new empire, the basis of continued Eritrean separate identity was no longer territorial exclusiveness. Instead it was the economic advancement which the Eritreans as individuals had earlier achieved and the privileges awarded by the colonial power in its attempt to co-opt them into the enlarged colonial system.

The Italian Colonial Impact on Eritrean National Consciousness

The first part of this chapter attempted to outline the objective impact of colonialism on Eritrean society. This was designated as 'objective' because its im-

pact could be studied in isolation during or after the end of the colonial period. The issues we shall presently discuss are, however, more delicate because they deal with the colonial impact on post-colonial reality, where the Italian impact is only one of many, and also because Italian colonial rule was replaced by British rule.

Between 1941 and 1945 the British, unsure of the fate of the Italian colonies, tried to preserve the colonial system inherited from the Italians. However, because of the basic differences between the British and the Italian colonial systems and because of the British desire to restructure the map of the Horn of Africa,[53] it was clear to the Eritreans that a new era was in the offing. For the first time the Eritreans had access to a weekly newspaper in Tigrinya and Arabic and primary education was expanded with the establishment of over one hundred primary schools and two secondary schools by 1950.[54]

For Eritrea the end of the Second World War meant the beginning of an arduous process of negotiations and the commissioning of a series of reports on its future. In 1946 the British lifted the ban on political activity thus initiating a new chapter in Eritrean political history, the significance of which remains to be studied.[55] It is at this point in Eritrean history that we shall attempt to assess Italian impact on the Eritrean national consciousness. Between 1946 and 1949 Eritrean leaders and their parties enjoyed unlimited freedom to express their opinions as to the fate of their country.

In an effort to arrive at an agreement on the future of Eritrea, the Allies sent a Four Power Commission in 1947 with the task of reporting on conditions in the former Italian colonies and to ascertain the wishes of their inhabitants. By this time five political parties had been functioning since 1946. In addition to the petitions and party campaigns, the Four Power Commission heard the wishes of the Eritrean people from a representative group of over 3,300 men. Written petitions by the Eritrean political parties were submitted to the four Power Commission which in turn investigated the strength and ethnic composition of these political parties. Taken together with the British assessment of the Eritrean political climate, we have sufficient material from all of these sources to assess the impact of Italian colonialism on the Eritrean national consciousness.[56]

Before the formation of these Eritrean political parties in 1946, the British had ample opportunity to comment on and to influence political developments. As early as 1944 the British reported that an irredentist movement for union with Ethiopia was giving them 'some cause for anxiety'.[57] Although the British were attracted to the restructuring of political boundaries along ethnic lines, thus following Italian African policy, it was only in 1943 that they worked out a detailed plan for the future of Eritrea. In one of the early 'disposal' plans, Stephen Longrigg, the military administrator, suggested that Britain should strive firstly for the unification of all the Tigrinya speaking communities into a united Tigrinyan nation and secondly for the incorporation of the western and northern parts of Eritrea into the Sudan.[58] The arguments for the creation of a united Tigrinyan nation, which he later developed in a book on the history of Eritrea, were based on the requirements of a 'common language, religion, type of society, economics and history'.[59] Longrigg tried to strengthen his arguments by sketching Italian attempts before 1896 to expand their possessions into the Tigrinyan region of Ethiopia and their policy after 1935 where Eritrea was extended to include all the Tigrinya speaking districts.

The creation of a united Tigrinya region was not, however, an end in itself. According to Longrigg, the united Tigrinya region should at a later stage be incorporated into Ethiopia, with the purpose of appeasing the irredentist movement and Ethiopian claims.[60] Such a 'disposal' plan was motivated by the reality and the importance of British strategic requirements at Massawa and Asmara.[61]

Commenting on Eritrean public opinion, fourteen months later, Longrigg reported that the disposal of the colony could assume one of the following forms: 1) annexing of the whole territory into Ethiopia, to which Longrigg added the comment that this was the irredentist position; 2) incorporation of Tigrinya-speaking regions into Ethiopia and of the rest of Eritrea into the Sudan; and 3) the formation of a united Tigrinyan nation, a view supported by the rulers of the Ethiopian province of Tigrai.[62]

From the above dispatches we can clearly notice the absence of any political opinion from the non-Tigrinyan communities of Eritrea. From 1941 until the formation of political parties in 1946, the only political organization that the British noticed was that of the irredentist movement; as late as 1944 however, the British were not seriously concerned about its strength. In a report on the situation in the colony as a whole, the British military administrator wrote,

> The politically active Eritreans are chiefly concentrated in Asmara. Their aspirations are taking the form of a crude brand of nationalism which is favourable of union with Ethiopia. ... The irredentists, mainly young men of the educated class, are supported by the wealthy merchants and also by certain prominent religious leaders above all the two Bishops of the Coptic Christians and the Catholics of the Ethiopian rite.[63].

The rumours of the possible return of Italy as a colonial power, and a religious conflict between the Muslim Sudanese colonial soldiers and the Eritrean Christians, further contributed to the consolidation of the unionist movement, which by 1946 had began to carry out acts of terrorism against Italian residents.[64]

By the time the British allowed the Eritreans to organize themselves and to make known their own views on the future of Eritrea to the Four Power Com-

mission of Enquiry, the question had already been posed and answered by the Tigrinyans who demanded an unconditional union with Ethiopia.[65] Regarding the opinion of the non-Tigrinyan population on the future of their country, the British noted:

> the attitude of the Moslem leaders towards political activities of their Christian neighbours has long been one of tolerant contempt. Moving as they do in the remote circles where news of world politics seldom penetrate, the Moslem leaders have never taken the Asmara politician seriously. ... Recent events, however, and above all the speech delivered by the late chief administrator (October 1946) have made a strong impression and have convinced the Moslems that 'unless they are prepared to think for themselves, the plateau Christians will do the thinking for them'.[66]

In January 1947 the Eritrean Moslems formed a political party known as the Moslem League which, according to British assessment, was composed of several factions but united in its opposition to union with Ethiopia.[67] Almost at the same time the remaining parties, namely the pro-Italy party and the Liberal Progressive party were formed.[68]

The arrival of the Four Power Commission of Enquiry, whose task was to ascertain the wishes of the population on the future of their country, led to a climax of political agitation. As the Eritrean political parties were soon suppressed and with the Unionist party having declined in importance after the incorporation of Eritrea into Ethiopia in 1952, the written petitions and political platforms which the various organizations presented to the Four Power Commission remain of the utmost importance.

The Commission of Enquiry followed two methods in ascertaining the wishes of the population. Firstly, it interviewed political leaders, received written petitions and wrote down in summary form the platforms of the political parties. Secondly, availing itself of the services of the British Administration, it interviewed the traditionally elected representatives of the population: altogether 3,336 individuals.[69] On this basis, the Commission presented Eritrean public opinion on the future of the country in the following manner: Among the 3,336 delegates, all of whom were party adherents, political affiliation was represented in the following proportions.

Unionist Party	47.8%
Moslem League	30.9%
Pro-Italy Party	10.7%
Liberal Progressive Party	9.3%
National Party	1.0%[70]

Commenting on the programmes of the political parties, the Commission of Enquiry noted that both the Unionist Party which called for an unconditional union with Ethiopia, and the Pro-Italy Party which desired the return of Italy, had simple and clear programmes which were easily understood by the

delegates.[71] The delegates belonging to the Moslem League, on the other hand, expressed differing points of view. According to the findings of the Commission

> a little over half of them asked for British Trusteeship; about one tenth wished for complete independence; and about one seventh stated they were ready to accept the decisions of the Moslem League, without exactly understanding its programme or having a definite opinion on the future of the country.[72]

The Liberal Progressive Party continued to call for the independence of Eritrea including the Tigrinya-speaking districts of Ethiopia.[73]

Although the findings of the Commission can only be taken as an indicator of trends, we believe that these findings suffice to answer the question about the extent of Italian impact on the Eritrean national consciousness. What emerges from the interviews of the 3,336 delegates is that virtually none of them expressed what can be explained as Eritrean national sentiment. In so far as the leaders of the Moslem League thought of Eritrean independence, their image of Eritrea was that of a Moslem country where Moslems constituted the majority of the territory's inhabitants.[74] In contrast, the Unionist Party campaigned from 1942 until the arrival of the Commission, as though fifty years of colonial rule had not brought any new unity to the colony.[75] The Liberal Progressive Party's position of a United Tigrinyan region was based on the glorious memories of Tigrinyan hegemony over the Ethiopian state.[76]

Concluding Discussion

The absence of an Eritrean national consciousness within the territorial boundaries created by the colonial system is neither peculiar to Eritrea nor to the Italian colonial system. Neither the British nor the French systems of colonial rule were designed for subsequent delegation of political and economic power to those whom they colonized.[77] While the French as late as 1944 firmly believed in the assimilation of the colonized societies on terms defined and set by them, the British implemented an extremely narrow meaning of 'Indirect Rule'.[78] As Professor Penelope Hetherington has summed it up, 'the British "Indirect Rule" system rejected the idea that Africans would ever be able to govern themselves within Western parliamentary institutions'.[79] Therefore, they were excluded from participation in the political life of the colony. 'This view', continued Hetherington, 'led to the advocacy of development of separate native states', within a given colony.[80]

Similar views were also manifested by I. F. Nicolson, a former colonial

bureaucrat in Nigeria in his review of British administration. He wrote, 'as social engineering and nation building, then the sixty years of British colonial administration in Nigeria must be judged as a failure'.[81]

Notwithstanding the rejection of the colonized in the affairs of the administration of the colonies, both British and French colonial rule gave some leeway for the emergence of colonial nationalism (or nationalism in the colonial context). This leeway consisted of the possibility for Africans (indeed not many of them) to acquire a Western education of their choice and what is most important, to establish their own press services. African nationalism within the colonial boundaries owes its existence, as Raymond Betts recently argued, to the existence of newspapers financed and published by Africans themselves.[82] Vague and ambiguous, African nationalism during the colonial period was primarily concerned with the expulsion of Europeans rather than with the establishment of a nation. Nevertheless, the existence of a few western-educated elites, and local African newspapers gave rise to movements which could be described as national and nationalist movements.[83]

In his reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism, Benedict Anderson has attempted to explain firstly, the origin of the concepts 'nation' and 'nationalism' and secondly, the spread of nationalism into Asia and Africa. Nationalism in the former colonies, argued Anderson, was 'a response to the new style global imperialism made possible by the achievements of industrial capitalism'.[84] The introduction of the ideology of nationalism in the colonies assumed several forms. 1) Due to the sheer size of the colonies, the imperial power was obliged to make use of an army of clerks who had to be bilingual, capable of mediating linguistically between the colonial power and the colonized peoples.[85] 2) Central to the rise of nationalism in the former colonies was the intelligentsia who had been exposed to western style education. Bilingualism, a product of western education, allowed access to modern western culture in the broadest sense, and in particular, to the models of nationalism, nation-ness and the nation state produced elsewhere in the course of the 19th century.[86] Anderson repeatedly emphasized the unique role played by the colonial school system in promoting colonial nationalism. He also pointed out that during the colonial period nationalist agitation was dominated by the educated youth who although of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds were nonetheless exposed to the same system of education and administration. Illustrating further the mechanisms for the spread of nationalism and nation-ness among the educated youth in Indonesia, Anderson wrote that

> their common experience gave the map which they studied (always coloured differently from British Malaya or the American Philippines) a territorially-specific imagined reality which was daily confirmed by the accents and physiognomies of their class room.[87]

Although Anderson was aware of the essential differences between the nationalism of most European monoglot nationalisms (e.g. Swedish in Sweden) and nationalisms in the colonies with their diverse linguistic and ethnic variations, he nevertheless contemplated that,

> for a world in which the nation state is the overwhelming norm, all this means that nations can now be imagined without linguistic communality — not in the naive spirit of nostros los Americanos, but out of a general awareness of what modern history has demonstrated to be possible.[88]

In a footnote Anderson clarified his choice of the word 'can' because as he put it, 'there are obviously plenty of cases where the possibility has been and is being rejected'.

By way of conclusion Anderson reasoned that colonial educational and administrative practice provided the territorial base for the 'new imagined communities' in which natives could come to see themselves as 'nationals'.

> The expansion of the colonial state which, so to speak, invited 'natives' into schools and offices, and of colonial capitalism which, as it were, excluded them from board rooms, meant that to an unprecedented extent the key early spokesmen for colonial nationalism were lonely, bilingual intelligentsia unattached to sturdy local bourgeoisies.[89]

Anderson's reflections on the origin and development of African colonial nationalism had been recognized and pointed out by earlier students of Africa.[90] However what distinguishes Anderson's study from the others is the levels of abstraction, the complicated processes involved in the formation of concepts and models and the manner in which those could be copied under different circumstances. Contrary to Marxist historiography of a 'nation' and 'nationalism' with its strong bias in favour of a single ethnically, linguistically and territorial limited phenomenon, Anderson argued that the modern states of Africa could be described and conceptualized as nation states in spite of their ethnic and linguistic diversity.[91] Anderson's reflections constitute a challenge to Marxism from within which, as he argued, had shied away from confronting the dimensions of nation-ness and nationalism.[92]

Reluctantly agreeing to Anderson's broad interpretations, let us now pose the question: Did Italian educational and administrative practice provide a basis for the articulation of the 'new imagined community' in which the inhabitants came to see themselves as 'nationals' of the colony known as Eritrea? The answer has to be in the negative for two reasons. Firstly, the colonial system impeded the development of an Eritrean intelligentsia who according to Anderson were the key spokesmen for colonial nationalism. Secondly, the colonial system did not succeed in superseding the vague but nevertheless discernible spirit of, to borrow Anderson's terminology,

Ethiopian-ness (or Ethiopian nationalism) prevalent among the largest ethnic group in Eritrea, namely the Tigrinyans.

In the case of Eritrea, the factors which would have most probably given rise to an Eritrean nationalism, i.e. western educated elites and a local press, did not exist by the end of the colonial period. Italian educational policy, as I argued in chapter three above, was intentionally constructed to prevent the emergence of a Western educated elite. The absence of an Eritrean educated elite coupled with the system of apartheid that the colonial state pursued in the domain of native affairs meant that there was hardly any conducive environment for the evolution of an Eritrean newspaper tradition — an important vehicle in the formation of national consciousness.

Although it is important in this respect to note the impact of Italian colonialism on nationalism, the colonial system ought not to be judged for what it failed to do. From the discussion of colonial policies and praxis, it becomes clear that Italian colonialism had its own objectives which were not congruent with those of the inhabitants of the colony.

Italian colonialism left in its wake some demographic, economic and political impact on Eritrea. The considerable population increase of the Tigrinyans vis-à-vis the rest of the inhabitants, and the consequent political implications constitute the most notable impact, while the absence of requisite conditions for the emergence of Eritrean nationalism constitute one of its least significant areas of impact.

FOOTNOTES

1. WO 230/106, *Half Yearly Report by the British Military Administration on the occupied territory of Eritrea*, 1942, p. 50: 'During the past six months, the Italian administration headed by Comm. Inserra and Dott. Melodia, has been found to be loyal and willing'.

2. For the history of the growth of light industries, see, Eldo Infante, *Rassegna tecnica delle industrie eritree*, Asmara, 1947; Idem., *L'Economia Eritrea*, Roma, 1948. For the purpose of comparison see appendix 1.

3. See Richard Sherman, *Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution*, N.Y. 1980, p. 111 on Eritrea's share in the Ethiopian industrial sector.

4. For the limitations of counterfactual method see Fischer, D., *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*, New York, 1970, pp. 15—21.

5. Jordan Gebre-Medhin, *The Eritrean Case: A Critical Appraisal of Peasant and Modernization Studies in Developmental Anthropology*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Purdue, Ohio, 1979, pp. 106—42. Extracts from the thesis are published under the title, 'European Colonial Rule and the Transformation of Rural Society', *Horn of Africa*, 6:2 (1983) 50—60.

6. Gebre-Medhin, 'European Colonial Rule', p. 53.

7. See my *Notes on Nationalism and Resistance*, pp. 89—90.

8. According to an assessment made in 1910 available land in the Eritrean highlands was estimated at 670,000 hectares of which 4,516 hectares were actually in the possession of Italian colonists. See Angelo Piccioli, *La nouva Italia d'oltre mare, Firenze*, 1933, vol. 1, p. 654. Most of the alienated land although juridically owned by Italian colonists was in actual fact leased to Eritrean peasants. See Renzo Sertolis Salis, *L'Ordinamento fondiario eritreo*, Padova, 1932, p. 91. In the British colonies of Kenya and Zambia, 3,7 million and 8,7 million hectares respectively were alienated. See Lucy Mair, *Native Policies in Africa*, London, 1936, pp. 103, 108.

9. See the anthropologist S. F. Nadel's concise but thorough study on 'Land Tenure on the Eritrean Plateau', *Africa*, 21:1 (1946) 1—21. Although sensitive to the historical development of the tenure system Nadel did not notice any significant change or transformation in either land use or rural society attributable to by Italian colonialism. See also Sertolis Salis, *L'Ordinamento fondiario*, pp. 182—83 where he concludes that Italian land laws circumscribed the evolution of private ownership to the disadvantage of Italian colonists.

10. Richard Leonard, 'European Colonization and the Socio-Economic Integration of Eritrea', in *The Eritrean Case*, Rome, 1980, pp. 59—60.

11. Britain assumed the administration of Eritrea until the end of the War. Eritrea's fate was to be decided by the Four Powers, namely, Britain, France, The United States and the Soviet Union. From 1946 onwards, the British initiated the process of decolonization by allowing political parties to exist. It is therfore incorrect to label the British period as a colonial period.

12, Santagata, *La colonia Eritrea*, p. 142.

13. Piccioli, *La nuova Italia*, pp. 1611—12; Santagata, *La colonia Eritrea*, pp. 99—100.

14. Leonard, 'European Colonization', p. 71.

15. Ibid., p. 83.

16. Leonard did not deem it important to establish whether the alleged 5 per cent working class had freed itself from pre-capitalist enviroment and whether it was in a position to pursue a working class ideology, In other areas according to Lucy Mair, *Native Policies*, p. 118, 'none of the native workers were primarily dependent upon wage labour to meet their obligations and satisfy their material needs'.

17. Leonard, 'European Colonization', p. 96.

18. WO230/229 Four Power Commission: Report on Eritrea, Section Five, Chapter Three. Results of hearings of representatives, p. 16. The Commission Report did not draw the conclusion which Leonard ascribes to it. It simply reported on Eritrean public opnion as expressed by delegates.

19. They opted for unconditional union with Ethiopia because the imapct of colonial socio-economic changes was not profound enough to make them pursue nationalist politics within the boundaries created by Italian colonialism.

20. Eritrean Muslims perceived rightly that union with Christian Ethiopia would turn them into second class citizens. Hence their campaign for independence or any other arrangement than unity was based on their perceptions of Ethiopia. For the Tigrinyans, unconditional union with Ethiopia guaranteed the end of colonialism and the recapturing of old historical links which had continued to exist in spite of strenous efforts by Italian colonialism to weaken them.

21. Irma Taddia, *Eritrea — Colonia, 1890—1952*, Milano, 1986, p. 37.

22. Ibid..

23. Ibid., p. 40.

24. See my review of Taddia, in *Notes on Resistance and Nationalism*, pp. 89—90.

25. Ibid..

26. S. F. Nadel, 'Land Tenure on the Eritrean Plateau', Africa, 21:1 (1946), p. 10.

27. The demand for independence came mainly from the pastoral ethnic groups in the lowlands whom Professor Taddia did not study because of their 'secondary role in the political economy of colonialism'.

28. Vittorio Castellano, 'Il censimento del 1939 della popolazione indigena della Eritrea e lo sviluppo della popolazione indigena della Eritrea storica, in un cinquantennio di ammnistrazione italiana', *Rivista di Demografia e Statistica*, 2:4 (1948) p. 272.

29. See C.C. Wrigley, 'Aspects of Economic History', in *The Cambridge History of Africa, from 1905 to 1940*, edited by Andrew Roberts, Cambridge, 1985, p. 134.

30. Castellano, 'Il censimento del 1939', p. 277.

31. Available documentation fails to provide clues as to the reasons for the real decline of the Tigre-speaking groups and of the Beja. Castellano who noticed the real decline suspected that the pastoral mode of life of these communities might have made them migrate for long periods into areas beyond Eritrea.

32. In 1946 the British estimated the population to be around 850,000 out of which 397,000 were Christians and 443,000 Moslems. See FO 371/69363, Four Power Commission: Report on Eritrea, Appendix 3, 1948. Since the census of 1939 was not accessible to the British authorities, it is very possible that their estimate was based on the census of 1931.

33. Since over 80 per cent of the Italian community and the great majority of Italian capital was invested in the Tigrinya region of Eritrea, the Tigrinyans were in a position to benefit from the slow but steady introduction of capitalist economy.

34. The political implication of population growth can not be sufficiently studied with the available documentation.

35. Roland Oliver and J.D.Fage, Short History of Africa, London, 1962, pp. 216—25.

36. It was in 1948 that the British confronted the problem. See WO230/255 on Traditional tribal organization and its collapse.

37. See Chapter Five pp. 133—34 above.

38. See Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*, New York, 1976.

39. Ibid.

40. Michele Checchi, *Movimento commerciale della colonia Eritrea*, Roma, 1912, p. 8.

41. As Piccioli, in *La nuova Italia d'oltremare*, p. 644 pointed out, local food production was greatly reduced due to locust invasions. The sharp rise of food imports from 1926 onwards, compared to the earlier period, can be seen as a response to avert famine. This was made possible by the economic system of colonialism.

42. See chapter two pp. 44—45 above.

43. The estimate is based on a number of indicators of a conjectural nature. 1) The industrial sector (see appendix 1) could not have employed more than 2,000 workers. 2) The Italian colonists who provided seasonal employment might have had a permanent working force of about 1,500. In 1937 according to a source cited by Taddia, *L'Eritrea — Colonia*, p. 252, the total number of Eritrean agricultural workers was 1,915. 3) The Eritrean colonial army in Eritrea as well in other Italian colonies was made up of about 10,000 men. 4) The service and commercial sector of the economy might have given employment to another 2,000 people. During the 1910—30 period the Eritrean population grew from 300,000 to over 500,000. By active labour force is here understood mostly adult men who might have constituted not more than a quarter of the entire population.

44. See appendix 2.

45. ibid..

46. See the discussion of reactions to colonial rule in chapter five above.

47. See Arnaldo Cicchitti, 'Il problema religioso nella legislazione coloniale italiana', *Rivista Coloniale*, 29:1 (1926), p. 490 on the basis for equality of all religions in Eritrea. Idem., 'Stato e Chiesa nelle colonie italiane', *Diritto ecclesiastico e rassegna di diritto matrimoniale*, 49:3—4 (1938), pp. 92—93 for the reasons why the colonial government in Eritrea favoured Islam.

48. In the academic year 1938—39 of 15,700 enrolled students in the whole empire, 5,332 were from Eritrea. See Istituto Fascista dell'Africa Italiana, *Annuario dell'Africa Italiana per l'anno 1940*, Roma, 1940, p. 464.

49. Addison Southard, *Eritrea: A Red Sea Italian Colony of Increasing Interest to American Commerce*, Washington, 1920, p. 28; Santaga, *La colonia Eritrea*, p. 139.

50. Pollera, A., 'L'Italia e le popolazioni dell'Eritrea: conseguenze sociali, morali ed economiche che la colonizzazione italiana in Eritrea ha avuto nella evoluzione delle popolazioni locali e delle regioni finitime', *Annali del Regio Istituto Superiore Orientale di Napoli*, 8:1 (1935) p. 76, 84.

51. ASMAI, pos. 181/46 file 218, Minister of Colonies Alessandro Lessona to governor general Rodolfo Graziani, 7.10.1937.

52. This was expressed very clearly in 1947 by the Liberal Progressive Party which campaigned for the formation of a Tigrinya nation:

> Eritrea having been for over fifty years under Italian government, feels herself to be much superior and more developed in general than Ethiopia. .... In the present situation an immediate annexation to Ethiopia would mean going back a hundred years.

FO 371/69365, Four Power Commission, Report on Eritrea, Appendix 101, 1948.

53. As early as 1942 the British entertained the idea of restructuring the map of the Horn of Africa along ethnic lines. These were: 1) to hand over Eritrea to Ethiopia; 2) to create a Greater Somalia. See William Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, Oxford, 1977, p. 68.

54. Eritrean Weekly News was published from 1941 up until 1952. A complete collection is available at the British Museum, Oriental Library, call. no. OP 947. See FO 371/190314, Eritrea, Annual Report, Asmara, December, 1950, concerning activities in the field of education.

55. Studies on the period are dominated by G.K.N. Trevaskis, *Eritrea: A Colony in transition, 1941—52*, Oxford, 1960. The author, a British officer, was stationed in Eritrea from 1943 to 1950. Although written with intimate knowledge of personalities and events, the book tends to defend the failure of Britain to control the armed and political activities of the Unionist Party by exaggerating Ethiopian influence.

56. Other than the recognition of Ethiopian 'legitimate demand' for an outlet to the sea, the Four Power Commission had no motive to misinterpret or distort the wishes of the Eritrean people. Although the Commission retained the power to decide over the fate of Eritrea, a unanimous Eritrean opinion would have weighed heavily in its

final decision. Hence the source material collected and the views documented were not deliberately biased in favour of or against Eritrean independence.

57. WO 230/168 Chief admnistrator Stephen Longrigg to GHQ MEF, 12.10.1944, where he informed his superiors that the Eritreans are putting forward a solution (that of United Tigrai) which was suggested to them (naturally without their knowledge) fourteen months previously.

58. FO 371/35631, Longrigg to GHQ MEF, 8.7.1942.

59. WO 230/168, Longrigg to General Ralph Hone, GHQ MEF, 12.7.1943.

60. Ibid..

61. Ibid..

62. WO 230/168, Longrigg to GHQ, MEF, 12.10.1944.

63. FO 371/41531, Overseas Planning Committee: Plan for Propaganda for Eritrea, paper no. 5050, 6.10.1944.

64. FO 371/53511, from GHQ MEF to the War Office, 1.7.1946; FO 371/63212, *Eritrea: Monthly Political Report*, November 1946.

65. The Unionist Party was formed without formal British sanction in 1944. It succeeded an earlier association known as The Association for the Love of Country which operated from 1941.

66. FO 371/63212, *Eritrea: Monthly Political Report*, no. 13 for January 1947, Appendix A.

67. Ibid.. On the Moslem League the officer who reported on the matter wrote that:

> It is understood that there is a strong party which will favour Egyptian sovereignty, there is certainly a party favouring union with the Sudan and there are also those who advocate some form of United Nations Organization Trusteeship. The fact the the Party is exclusively Moslem is contrary to the pro-Ethiopian gospel that blood is stronger than religion.

68. The Liberal Progressive Party was formed on February 1947, with a programme for absolute independence of Eritrea including that of,

> Tigrai territory, with which we are bound by ties of language, ethnically, historically and economically, be given back to Eritrea as it was before 1889 and also during the period of Italian occupation in 1935—41.

See FO 371/69363, Four Power Commission Report on Eritrea, chapter 6, pp. 6—7. For the programme of the Pro-Italy Party, see FO 371/63212 Eritrea: Monthly Political Report, no. 22, of October 1947.

69. WO230/229 Four Power Commission Report on Eritrea, Section Five, Chapter Three, pp. 15—16.

70. WO 230/229, Four Power Commission: Eritrea Report, Section V, chapter three: Relative importance of views expressed by representatives, p. 16. These figures were modified since the number of people represented by the delegates differed. The sympathies of the population were thus expressed:

Party	Number of People Represented by Delegates	Percentage
The Moslem League	495,040	40.5
The Unionist Party	546,954	44.8
Liberal Progressive	52,985	4.4
Pro-Italy	113,260	9.2
National	13,985	1.1

Total number of people represented by delegates: 1,212,000
Total population of Eritrea computed on the information supplied by the parties: 1,790,000. The British estimated Eritrea's population in 1947 to be around 850,000.

71 WO230/229 Four Power Commission: Report on Eritrea, Annex 1(a) p. 5.

72. Ibid., Annex 1 (a), p. 5.

73. WO 230/229, FPC: Report on Eritrea, Section V, Chapter Three, p. 16.

74. FO 371/69365, FPC: Report on Eritrea, Appendix 103. Memorandum from the Eritrean Moslem League, p. 2.

> The Eritrean people are divided into two parties. One is Mohammedan and the other Coptic. The former Mohammedans are two thirds of the population and they occupy nearly nine tenths of the land.

75. FO371/69363 Four Power Commission Report, Appendix 93, on the position of the Unionist Party.

76. FO 371/69365, FPC: Report on Eritrea, Appendix, Liberal Progressive Party Memorandum, p. 7.

> All wars in northern Ethiopia, both against Egyptians and Italians, including the battle of Metemma against the Dervishes were fought by populations and chiefs of Eritrea and Tigrai and not Shoans; which shows that the geographical, ethnic and historical backgrounds of the Tigre (meaning Tigrinya) speaking population has nothing in common with the Shoan people. If we then want to speak about ancient times, we are certain that the millenary Ethiopian civilization originated from Eritrea and Tigrai (Axum) and not from Shoa, towards the north, the latter people being at that time nomads, and uncivilized. It must be said, for the sake of accuracy, that at that time Shoa was a colony of the Tigrai (Tigrinya speaking) populations.
>
> (Clarification notes in brackets added.)

77. See the contribution by Bronislaw Malinowski, 'Modern Anthropology and European Rule', in *Reale Accademia d'Italia, Convegno di scienze morali e storiche: Tema Africa*, Roma, 1939, vol. 2, p. 901.

78. See Jacques Stern, *The French Colonies, 1944*, p. 12.

79. Penelope Hetherington, *British Paternalism and Africa*, 1920—1940, London, 1978, p. 148.

80. Ibid..

81. I.F. Nicolson, *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900—1960*, London, 1969, p. 310.

82. Raymond Betts, *Uncertain Dimensions: Western Overseas Empires in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, 1985, p. 163.

83. Martin, L. Kilson, 'Nationalism and Social Classes in British West Africa', in *Social Change: The Colonial Situation*, edited by Immanuel Wallerstein, New York, 1966, p. 534.

84. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983, p. 127.

85. Ibid., p. 106.

86. Ibid., p. 108.

87. Ibid., p. 111.

88. Ibid., p. 123.

89. Ibid., p. 127.

90. See Martin L. Kilson, 'Nationalism and Social Classes in British West Africa', in Wallerstein ed., *Social Change*, pp. 333—50. See also Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa*, London, 1956.

91. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 123.

92. Ibid., p. 13.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Before developing a partial theory of colonialism, I shall summarize and comment on Italian interpretations of the motives for colonial expansion. I shall also answer the questions raised in the introduction about Italian aims in Eritrea and the methods they used to achieve their objectives.

Italian Interpretations of the Motives for Colonial Expansion

The central theme in the interpretations by Italian historians of the motives for Italian colonial expansion is the causal connection between internal Italian conditions and colonial expansion. The Gramscian interpretation, as outlined in the introduction, analysed colonial expansion as an instrument for sidetracking economic and political reforms. The politics of colonialism appeared to be directed, according to Gramsci, mainly towards the southern Italian peasant whose demand for political and economic reforms were opposed both by the central state and the southern landed bourgeoisie.

The views of Gramsci were corroborated by Wolfgang Schieder's social imperialist interpretation of Italian colonial history. Schieder stressed even more strongly the causal connection between colonial expansion and internal conditions. For Schieder, colonialism occurred at a transitional phase between early or 'primitive' unification and the perfection of the nation state. This transitional phase created problems of participation for hitherto unintegrated groups and of economic distribution between the various social groups within a newly unified nation.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Francesco Crispi, Italy embarked on the policy of colonialism, according to Schieder, in order to postpone a democratic solution to the above-mentioned problems. There was also an additional motive which paved the way for colonial expansion. Schieder called this 'the violent demographic explosion', which in turn threatened to fragment the ruling class because it was continuously pressed by the problems emanating from the population explosion. The state of Francesco Crispi, concluded Schieder, adopted colonialism in order to solidify the ideological adherence of the bourgeoisie against internal economic and demographic pressures.

The Italo-Ethiopian war of 1895—96, however, achieved the contrary result of increasing the fragmentation of the ruling class. The defeat at Adwa in March 1896 put an end to the colonial question.

Other interpretations that did not stress so strongly the causal connection between internal conditions and colonial expansion were those by Roberto Michels and Carlo Zaghi. For the former, colonialism was a right reserved for those states which had the power and interests to engage in and sustain it. Michel's interpretation was very similar to that developed by Joseph Schumpeter a few years later. Italy, according to Michels, pursued a policy of colonialism because she was in a position to do so and because the country required colonies for population settlement.

For Carlo Zaghi, on the other hand, the causal connection was not so clear, as there were several other equally important motives for colonial expansion. After the defeat at Dogali (1887) one of the main motives, according to Zaghi, was the autonomous decision of the Italian military to carry out little-publicized wars of revenge, in complete disregard of directives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As an autonomous institution, the military was able to carry out wars of attrition until its final defeat at Adwa in 1896.

Another equally important feature of Italian interpretation is the absence of altruistic motives for colonial expansion. In other words, Eritrea was colonized not for the interests and for the sake of its inhabitants but for the interests of Italy. The Italian state of Francesco Crispi perceived African colonies in terms of vast regions for settlement and as sources of raw materials all to be exploited for the needs and interests of Italy. As I shall presently discuss below, the colonial inhabitants, i.e. the Eritreans, were considered as part of the raw material resources to be exploited.

Most studies of Italian motives for colonial expansion limit themselves to explaining the successful motives for colonial expansion. The prolonged anticolonialist struggle and its tradition, which succeeded in limiting the full implementation of colonial policies, is not treated as an integral part of the story. The strength of the anticolonialist impact can be illustrated by the fate of Italian colonial policy after the battle of Adwa. Not only was Prime Minister Crispi replaced, but the Italian state was prepared to scrap altogether its African colonial policy.

The anticolonialist position was centred around two principal arguments.[1] The first argument stressed the principle of the right to independence and national identity. The anticolonialists, comprising socialists, democrats, extreme leftists and Risorgimentalists, wrote and agitated against the colonial policy by comparing and reversing the position of Italy with that of Ethiopia. The

gist of the anticolonialist position was expressed by the poet Guiseppe Carducci soon after the Dogali incident: 'The Abyssinians had a right to oppose us as we have the right to oppose Austrian encroachments into our land'.[2] The colonial issue was brought into the forefront by the anticolonialist groups when Italian colonialism stumbled from one crisis into another. The sacred right of people and nations to independence was repeatedly stressed and the continued independent existence of Ethiopia was taken as a moral precondition for 'Italy to demand the right to remain independent'.[3]

The second line of argument stressed the national, ethnocentrist and racialist basis of colonialist argumentation. The colonialist position emphasized the right of stronger nations to subjugate weaker ones and the duty to civilize the barbarians, as there were no inherent rights in barbarism. To those assertions the anticolonialists responded in the following manner. The criteria for the spread of 'civilization' ought to be the principle of brotherhood and peaceful penetration and without the use of force.[4] Moreover, the anticolonialists stressed the fallacy of the colonialist position by pointing out that Italy already had its colonies to civilize in the southern half of Italy, as these were plagued by illiteracy and extreme poverty.[5]

Seen from the perspectives of 19th century European practical philosophy, the successful implementation of colonialism was a triumph against the ideals campaigned for by the anti-colonialist groups.[6] The Italian political elite, like its European counterparts, was divided into those who favoured colonialism and argued for it in terms of the survival of the fittest, and those who espoused an ideology of equality for all nations and the right of people to independence.

The anticolonialist positions failed to make a decisive impact for two main reasons. The first was that European technological superiority over Africa was so advanced that the financial cost of colonization was kept to an acceptable minimum, and thus tolerated by the tax payer.[7] The second reason was the ease with which European states conquered Africa, the limited scale of African resistance and the inability of the colonized to enter into the metropolitan debate, and all these factors made the anti-colonialist position weak and fragmented.[8]

Colonial Objectives

The main conclusion that I have derived from colonial economic practice is that they were motivated by the interests of Italy and not by those of the colony. Let me recapitulate the salient features of the colonial political

economy. After the unsuccessful attempt to use Eritrea as an outlet for emigration, Italy set out to restructure the colonial society according to its own needs and capabilities.

During the years 1897—1932, Eritrea was perceived as a source of raw materials and as an entrepôt for the economic and commercial penetration of Ethiopia. Moreover, Eritrea was in fact not developed as a source of raw materials because of a combination of internal and external considerations. Some of these factors were the colony's inherent poverty in accessible raw materials, and the fear that a drastic restructuring of the economy might arouse Eritrean resistance.

Far more decisive, however, were the external factors which determined the role that Eritrea was expected to play. Since Ethiopia remained the ultimate target for Italian penetration and eventual domination, the role that Italy assigned to its colony was that of a staging post for the transit trade. From Eritrea, Italy controlled the export and import trade of northern Ethiopia and this was of considerable magnitude. The tapping of Ethiopian trade by using Eritrea as a staging post turned the latter into a colony of political rather than economic importance.

From 1907 onwards, Eritrea was also used as a reservoir of soldiers for Italian colonial expansion elsewhere. Although the evidence on the impact of recruitment on the colony's economy as a whole leaves a great deal to be desired, we can, I believe, draw the conclusion that it was far more important for Italy to deploy Eritrean colonial soldiers in Somalia, Libya and later in Ethiopia than to allow Italian capitalism to use them in Eritrea. During both 1912—16 and 1935—41 periods, large scale recruitment had caused severe shortages of labour, and in the latter period a severe shortage of food production.

The functions of Eritrea, firstly as a focus of transit trade and secondly as a reservoir of men for the colonial army, explain both the scarcity of readily exploitable raw material resources and the reluctance of Italian capitalists to invest in the production sector.

From 1935 until 1941 Eritreans were sent to consolidate the Italian occupation of Ethiopia while their country was transformed into a colony of settlement. In 1940, 75,000 Italians had settled in Eritrea while as many as 70,000 Eritreans (or over 12 per cent of the entire population) were recruited to the army and deployed in Ethiopia. The Italian settlers, in contrast to those who were encouraged to settle prior to 1900, were mainly engaged in industry and commerce. Owing to its strategic location Eritrea was destined to be a base for the Italian settlers to penetrate Ethiopia.

As Italian needs changed through the decades, Eritrea and its inhabitants were accordingly reorganized. The colony did not exist as a separate entity with an autonomous economic system. The colony and its inhabitants

belonged to Italy. In the context of the colonial political economy, the roles of the Eritrean were limited to those defined by the metropole. During most of the colonial period the metropole needed a reservoir of labour that could be mobilized to such ends as the colonial army. The role of the Eritrean, as we can clearly see from colonial educational and native policies, was to fulfill the demands put on him by Italy.

During the early phase, i.e. 1897—1907 under Governor Ferdinando Martini, the policy of the colonial administration was decidedly against the opening of schools for Eritreans. The colonial administration had two main considerations in mind. Firstly, educated Eritreans would make colonial rule difficult. As evidence the British experience in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and India was cited. The second consideration was that Ferdinando Martini's perception of colonialism meant that its purpose was to achieve absolute domination — a position that could only be attained in colonies where the introduction of western style education was strictly forbidden.

Although the hard-line policy of Martini was set aside by subsequent governors, colonial administration still only offered the Eritrean the maximum of elementary education. The Catholic and the Swedish Missions were forced to abide by the regulations of the colonial government. In the 1920's, the debate on the role of education was given a new dimension when the Minister of Colonies Luigi Federezoni, stressed the close association between the degree of docility of the native population and the availability of colonial education. The Minister of Colonies was convinced that education could be used to create a docile population.

From the 1930's onwards, native education was discussed in terms of how it could best facilitate colonial domination. It was argued that native education be adopted to the specific exigencies of colonialism. These changing exigencies of colonialism, discussed in Chapter Two, called for an educational policy that would make virtually impossible the evolution of Eritrean political consciousness. The scope of education, as adumbrated by the superintendent for schools, Andrea Festa, was to provide Eritrean children with notions of Italian civilization in order to make them conscious propagandists and militants behind the Italian flag.

Through their native policies the Italians aspired to organize Eritrea and its inhabitants according to their changing needs. In the early phase, 1897—1907, the colonial administration advocated the establishment of racial barriers between the colonizer and the colonized. These were motivated by a need to reduce the costs of colonization and to make the colony fulfill metropolitan demands. Up to 1907 the necessity of exercising absolute domination was justified on the grounds that a more liberal policy might arouse Eritrean resistance.

From 1907, however, the role of Eritrean colonial soldiers in the pacification of Somalia and the colonization of Libya and the increased capability of the metropole to deal with colonial matters, brought about a new policy of domination. The Eritrean was perceived as a subject who, owing to his 'infantile' mental aptitude, had to be dominated. This policy called for the strict maintenance of Eritrean social organization and a native administrative apparatus designed to ensure the continuation of colonial rule. Eritrean social organization was considered inherently different and thus the objective of native policy lay in its preservation.

The policy of preserving Eritrean social organization had two advantages. Firstly, it reduced the financial committment of the colonial state by transferring a considerable part of the cost of administration onto the Eritrean peasantry. Secondly, it enabled the colonial power to maintain the myth that Eritrean society was not susceptible to change. This was further strengthened by the colonial educational policy with its deliberate intention of circumscribing the possibilities available to Eritreans by limiting them to the lower level of elementary schooling.

The racialist ideology of the Fascist state, which in the case of Eritrea became evident from 1932 onwards, drastically defined the position of the Eritrean in the colonial system. The purpose of the Italian presence in Africa was to structure the world of the colonized according to the needs of the metropole. The Eritrean, whose place was defined by 'Mother Nature', was destined to be ruled. Italy would neither create the conditions for Eritreans to develop according to their own capabilities nor assimilate them, but would rule over the people in perpetuity. Unlike Britain and France, Italian colonialism did not give Eritreans any opportunity to either challenge the colonial system or to enter into a dialogue with Italian ideologists of colonialism.

Partial Theory of Colonialism

The theory of colonialism that is sketched below is partial, because the empirical material on which it is based is limited solely to Italian colonialism in Eritrea. A more complete theory of colonialism, a task beyond the scope of this study, ought to include a more comprehensive comparative analysis of the various colonial systems as well as that of Italian colonialism in other parts of Africa.

An analysis of colonial practice reveals the salient features of colonialism to be 1) the subjugation of the economy of the colony to the needs of the metropole; 2) the implementation of an educational policy with the intention of perpetuating colonialism; and 3) the perception of relations between the

colonizer and the colonized in immutable terms. On the basis of these features, colonialism may be theorized as a *system of domination established by military conquest for the interests of the colonizing power.* Its objectives are the domination and subjugation of the colony and its inhabitants.

The obvious question that such a definition raises is the purpose of domination. Did the Italian ruling classes embark on colonization solely driven by the yet unexplained and perhaps unexplainable desire for domination over less organized communities? If the decades after decolonization can throw any light on the motives for colonization, it is that colonies and peripheries were not essential for capitalist development of the colonizing countries. Moreover, neither the duration of the colonial period nor the degree of restructuring brought about by colonialism would explain the demise of colonialism.

Although the exploitation of human and material resources in the colony remained the objective of Italian colonialism, it is not sufficient to explain colonialism as a phenomenon driven solely by economic motives, since such economic objectives could have been achieved without formal colonization. The dismantling of the colonial system in Africa and the prevailing pattern of trade between Africa and Western Europe strongly indicates that the continent's resources could have been exploited by other means than colonization.[9]

The colonization that I have studied appears to me to have occured at a particular social, political and economic epoch in Italy where advanced technology and the prevalent Social Darwinist ideology created favourable conditions for colonial expansion.

From an analysis of Italian colonial practice, I have attempted to show that colonial domination served the interests of the metropole which were of an economic and political nature. Bearing in mind both the weaknesses of economic motives and the tenuous connection between internal (Italian) conditions and colonial expansion, the Schumpeterian interpretation of colonialism remains an uncomfortable but yet plausible explanation. Schumpeter viewed colonialism as an irrational urge by states, to achieve forcible expansion for the purpose of domination.

An analysis of colonial practice in the economic and educational spheres further shows that the objectives of colonialism were to perpetuate its position of domination. The colony and its inhabitants were to remain under the tutelage of the colonial power. While the metropole through its educational and economic practices laid down the basis for its continued presence, ideologically, it attempted to further strengthen its position by defining the colonized as a human being who 'may never reach the age of maturity'.

Colonialism was not concerned with modernizing the colony in the interests of the colonized. The colony and its inhabitants were the objects rather than the subjects of colonialism. The colony hardly had a separate existence as can

be evidenced in the manner by which the metropole used Eritrea as a reservoir of soldiers for the colonial army.

Since Italian colonialism did not in any manner and at any moment in the colonial period anticipate its own demise, it limited its aspirations to the policy of winning the allegiance of the colonized to its system. This was achieved mainly through the educational policy. Colonialism was throughout the colonial period perceived by its perpetrators as a fact of nature.

Contrary to what some historians and political scientists believe, colonialism was not a contradictory phenomenon that simultaneously exploited while laying down the basis for the modernization of the colony.[10] Contrary to what Karl Marx once believed, colonialism was not engaged in the process of creating a world after its own image.[11]

This study on colonial practice demonstrates that the objectives of colonialism were to exploit the resources of the colonized according to its own needs and irrespective of the interests of the colony and its inhabitants. The economic and political role of the colonized were defined in such a manner so as to keep the latter subjugated to the interests of the metropole. It was for instance virtually impossible for the Eritrean, whose position was defined by his status and race, to reach a competing position with the colonizer. The educational system was so designed that access by the colonized was limited, a fact which circumscribed his capacity to challange the colonial phenomenon as well as blocking his economic career in the colonial capitalist sector. Furthermore, racial laws limited him to the periphery of the modern sector.

Conclusions similar to the partial theory that I sketched above have been made by a number of Third World writers. For Frantz Fanon, one of the few outstanding critics, colonialism treated the colonized as slaves and tried to persuade them to believe that the land they worked belonged to them and that the mines where they lost their health were owned by the colonized.[12] The colonist settler in Africa, according to Fanon's graphic description, 'was in fact saying to the native kill yourself so that I may become rich'.[13]

In a paper devoted to African and Third World writers on Imperialism, Thomas Hodgkin identified three main components. The first component, which according to Hodgkin was self-evident for most African and Third World writers, dealt with the fact that 'the process of European penetration and conquest was itself a barbarous one', where 'civilization' was imposed at gun point.[14] The theme of barbarism was further continued in that the colonial system, with the new forms of government and administration, of economic organization, and of dominant ideology, resulted in the dehumanization of the mass of the indigenous population.[15] The final component in African and Third World writings on imperialism challenged the prevailing view of colonialism as a modernizing phenomenon by putting forward a cultural relativist perception of societies, where it was argued that there was no

necessary connection between the level of a people's technological development and the quality of its civilization.[16]

The few Eritreans who were capable of expressing their thoughts in writing also interpreted colonialism, albeit in language far less sophisticated, in the manner sketched above. For Blatta Gebre Egziabeher, writing in 1898, colonial rule was a state of slavery comparable to that experienced by the Jews during the reign of Emperor Titus in the first Century A.D..[17] As outlined in chapter five, Father Gebre Yesus Haile, writing in the late 1920's, repeatedly stressed that the Italian colonizers not only used Eritreans as instruments for their colonial expansion elsewhere, but treated them as no better than dogs.[18]

Colonialism, however, did not last forever. Neither were its objectives fully achieved. In addition to such external factors as the rise of the anticolonialist powers, i.e. the United States and the Soviet Union,[19] colonialism had other constraints which slowed the process of a complete subjugation of the colonized. These were the anticolonialist undercurrents, the fear of Eritrean resistance and the non-economic (or strategic) importance of the colony.

After 1900, Italian anticolonialism might be seen in Italian capital's lack of interest in exploiting the resources of the colony rather than through a sustained critique of the colonial system. The anticolonialist position of the Catholic Church, although limited to questions of principle, remained none the less a potential factor against the racialist ideology of colonialism.

The decisive factor which compelled the colonial administration to adopt economic policies that minimized conflict with the colonized was the fear of Eritrean resistance. As discussed in Chapter Five the colonial state had, from about 1910 onwards, ample force to quell any resistance, but instead chose to pursue a cautious policy in the sensitive area of land alienation. The colonial administration used the fear of Eritrean resistance to defuse criticism from colonialist quarters which called for a more determined policy of land alienation.

Finally, strategic considerations, which far outweighed the economic value of Eritrea, defined the scope of colonial economic and native policies. These were the use of the colony as a reservoir of colonial soldiers, as a base for transit trade and lastly, as a staging post for the penetration and the eventual colonization of Ethiopia. As Eritrea was important strategically, Italian colonial rule emphasized the maintenance of political stability which, in turn, meant a minimum restructuring of pre-colonial social and economic structures.

Conclusion

When the Italians relinquished their power (1941) and the Eritreans were eventually provided with the opportunity to express their wishes as to the future of their country in 1948, there was virtually no nationalist organization that articulated the desire for Eritrean independence within the boundaries that existed up to 1936. Unlike the situation in the French and British colonies, there were no Eritrean intellectuals who were educated enough to speak for the creation of an Eritrean state.[20]

The Unionist Party, the first organization that emerged soon after 1941, campaigned for an unconditional union with Ethiopia. The Tigrinyan and Christian roots of the Unionist Party and its close association with the Ethiopian state provoked the formation of several political organizations which defined their strategies as a response to the claims and challenges made by the former. As the Four Power Commission of Enquiry found out seven years after the end of Italian colonial rule, Eritrean 'public opinion' did not in any manner express the desire for the creation of an Eritrean state.

The Unionist Party, by far the largest party, in fact negated the existence of Eritrean nationalism and the experience of Eritrea as a separate political entity (1882—1941), by its sustained campaign for union with Ethiopia. Although the historical and ideological basis of the Unionist Party, as discussed in Chapter Five, stretched back to the precolonial period, what appeared striking was that fifty years of colonial rule had not weakened the 'irredentist sentiments' of the Tigrinyan people. By desiring the incorporation into Ethiopia of regions that had not previously been part of the precolonial Ethiopian polity, the Unionist Party tried to exploit the conditions brought about by the Italian creation of Eritrea for its own advantage.

The other political organizations, which can be described as parties opposing the Unionist Party, had strategies which had very little to do with the creation of an Eritrean nation. The Liberal Progressive Party with its alleged support of slightly over 9 per cent of the population campaigned for the creation of a United Tigrinya nation — a political objective whose origin predated Italian colonialism. Similar to the Unionist Party, the Liberal Progressive Party also expressed a wish to incorporate those areas of Eritrea which had not previously belonged to the Ethiopian/Tigrai state.

The Pro-Italy Party which also had about 10 per cent support, campaigned for the return of Italian colonial rule as a better alternative for Eritrea than the union with Ethiopia.

The Moslem League, the largest party opposing the claims of the Unionist Party, was an amorphous body whose main unifying theme was its opposition to any form of union with Christian Ethiopia. As the British and the Four Power Commission of Enquiry found out, the Moslem League lacked a clear

policy for the future of Eritrea. While the majority expressed a preference for a trusteeship of either the British or the United Nations, only a fraction (up to 10 per cent according to the estimate of the Four Power Commission) wished independence. Neither the Four Power Commission of Enquiry nor the British were able to identify whether those who desired independence had the entire territory in mind or the regions that they represented.

It is hardly surprising that the possibility of establishing an independent Eritrea was not contemplated during the 1947—48 period. A similar state of confusion can be easily pointed out in other colonies. Writing in the mid 1940's, the well known Nigerian politician Nnamdi Azikiwe argued that Nigeria was not a nation but a geographical expression, and that there were no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there were English.[21]

The reasons for the virtual absence of national consiousness based on colonial territorial boundaries are, I believe, located in the nature of the creation of colonial territories and in the type of colonial system. Eritrea, as outlined in the introduction, was consolidated into a colony out of disparate regions with different historical and ecological characteristics. The Tigrinyans maintained, throughout the colonial period, their sporadic contacts with the rest of Ethiopia. The Non-Tigrinyans, who had either very little contact with Ethiopia or were treated as peripheral regions by the latter, inhabited those regions of least importance to the colonial system. On the demise of the Italian colonial period, as the events of 1947—48 strongly indicated, Eritrea tended to dissolve into its precolonial constituent parts. Fifty years of colonial rule was neither long enough nor sufficiently profound to bring about a political transformation that could be described in terms of Eritrean nationalism.

In addition to the persistence of precolonial traditions and allegiances, which colonialism was unable to weaken, the manner in which colonial rule was executed militated against the emergence of a national consciousness. Through its native policy, the colonial administration ruled Eritrea as an empire rather than as a nation. On the principle that the task of native policy was the maintenance of traditional Eritrean social organization, the colonial administration discouraged inter-regional and inter-ethnic mobility.

Bearing in mind that Eritrea was predominantly rural, the colonial administration exercised its rule through the local traditional elite. Local rulers were chosen from among the traditional ruling elite and were confined to the districts of their origin. The administrative districts were autonomous of each other and were only united at the apex of the administration in the office of the governor.

Since the colonial administration did not expect to share power at the centre with Eritreans, it did not allow (even by the policy of non-interference) the formation and articulation of an Eritrean public opinion. The local press (owned and run by the colonized), which according to Raymond Betts was the

main vehicle for the evolution of colonial nationalism, did not exist in Eritrea. As abstract ideas, the concepts of nation and nationalism, within the context of colonial territories, demanded 'intellectuals' who were capable of interpreting them. By limiting the Eritrean to rudimentary education, the colonial administration was able to hinder the emergence of an Eritrean nationalist intellectual group and this had profound consequences for the emergence of Eritrean nationalism.[22]

Italian colonialism left behind a colony whose modern sector was virtually dominated by Italian settlers.[23] It left behind a population accustomed to an imposed political and economic stability. It also left behind a population with an incohate consciousness of a separate identity that can be defined as Eritrean, which was based and founded upon the colonial ideology of divide and rule and the economic co-option of the Eritreans in the pacification and colonization of Ethiopia during the 1936—41 period. The links between consciousness of identity and national consciousness were not apparent in the political debates of 1947—48.

After the demise of Italian rule and the end of the Second World War, the British, the Allies, the Ethiopian state and the United Nations initiated the process of decolonization. This ended in the federation of Eritrea, as an autonomous unit, with the Ethiopian Empire in 1950.[24]

A year before the abrogation of the Federal Union and the incorporation of Eritrea as Ethiopia's fourteenth province in 1962, an organization known as the Eritrean Liberation Front initiated an armed struggle against Ethiopian violations of the terms of the Federal Union.

However, the sheer evidence of the continued armed conflict between Eritrean liberation movements and the Ethiopian state forces the question of the nature and dynamics of what, since the late 1960's, can clearly be described as 'Eritrean nationalism', and this is a subject for scientific examination.[25]

The primary focus of this study was an assessment of the Italian colonial impact and has, I hope, provided sufficient data on the extremely tenuous impact of colonialism on Eritrean society. A follow-up study of the subsequent British period and the decade of the 1950's would enable us to locate the origin and development of the nationalist phenomenon.

FOOTNOTES

1. For the discussion on Italian anticolonialism I am greately indebted to Romain Rainero's study on the subject, *L'anticolonialismo italiano da Assab ad Adua (1882—96)*, Milano, 1971, to Angelo Del Boca's first volume, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, Milano, 1976, to Alberto Acquarone's survey on Italian political climate during the formation of the Italian Colonial Institute in 1906, 'Politica estera e organizzazione del consenso nell'eta giolittiana: il congresso dell'Asmara e la fondazione dell'Istituto Coloniale Italiano', *Storia Contemporanea*, 6:1 (1977) 57—119, 6:2 (1977) 291—334, 6:3 (1977) 549—69 and finally to Roberto Battaglia's critical study, *La prima guerra d'Africa*, Torino, 1958, on the circumstances leading to the battle of Adwa.

2. Rainero, *L'anticolonialismo*, p. 160. The statement was made soon after the Dogali incident in early 1887.

3. Ibid., p. 176; *Del Boca, Gli italiani*, vol.1, 1976, pp. 246—47; see also Battaglia, *La prima guerra*, p. 250.

4. Ibid., pp. 184—85.

5. Ibid., p. 173.

6. Surveying the philosophical climate of nineteenth century England, the historian David Thomson wrote that, in the third phase, i.e. last decade of the century,

> the emphasis was more strongly on diversity and conflict, more weakly on unity and harmony...Men thought more and more on Nietzschean terms of "will to power". The collision of ideas, rapidly becoming a clash of ideologies, took conrete shape in the movements of violence: in the violence of the Irish independence movement ... and the new Imperialisms.
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> *England in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1964, p. 234.

For a more concrete study on the philosophical underpinnings of British anticolonialism see Bernard Porter, *The Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa*, London, 1968. See also Bertrand Russel, *History of Western Philosophy*, New York, 1972, pp. 760—73, on Nietzsche and his impact on nineteenth century Europe.

7. On the impact of advanced technology but above all in firearms, on the colonization of Africa, see Philip Curtin et. al., *African History*, Boston, 1978, pp. 447—50. For a technological interpretation of colonization see Daniel Headrik, *Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1981.

8. On the eve of the partition of Africa there were, in Ghana, Western educated Africans. Although they did not save Ghana from being colonized, these educated Africans played an important role in shaping British colonial policy towards Ghana. See Björn Edsman, *Lawyers in Gold Coast Politics*, c. 1900—1945, Uppsala, 1979.

9. For the limited significance of colonies in European economic development see Allan S. Milward and S. B. Saul, *The Development of the Economies of Continental Europe, 1850—1914*, London, 1977, pp. 503—05. Specifically on Italy's pattern of development and where the African connection hardly played any role, see Richard Webster, *Italy's Industrial Imperialism, 1905—1914*, Berkeley, 1975, p. 201.

10. The most notorious example still remains the work by L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *Burden of Empire: An Appraisal of Western Colonialism in Africa*, London, 1967, Idem., 'Economic Achievements of the Colonizers: An Assessment', in *The Economics of Colonialism*, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 673—96.

In a measured language, Roland Oliver and J. D. Fage in their *Short History of Africa*, London 1962 pp. 216—25 also interpret colonialism as the initiator of an Age of Improvement during the 1919—39 period. Among political scientists, mention can be made of Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Road to Independence: Ghana and Ivory Coast*, Paris, 1964 and idem., ed., *Social Change: The Colonial Situation*, New York, 1966.

11. The practice of Italian Colonialism negates Karl Marx's vision. On the contrary, the view that colonialism has impoverished the areas it colonized and left behind it peripheries tied down to it in a continously growing degree of dependence, is made by no other than Immanuel Wallerstein himself in his recent work on *Historical Capitalism*, London, 1983, and *The Politics of World Economy: The States, the Movements and the Civilizations*, Cambridge, 1984.

12. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Paris, 1961 (London 1963) p. 156.

13. Ibid..

14. Thomas Hodgkin, 'Some African and Third World Theories of Imperialism', in Bob Sutcliffe and Roger Owen, eds., *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, London, 1972, p. 103. Hodgkin based his paper largely on the writings of Africans from the former French West Africa.

15. Ibid., p. 104.

16. Ibid., p. 105.

17. See my study on Blatta Gebre Egziabeher and his works in *Notes on Nationalism and Resistance in Eritrea*, 1890—1940, pp. 1—21.

18. Father Gebre Yesus Haile, *Hade Zanta* (A story), written in 1928, published in Asmara, 1950, pp. 46, 50.

19. William Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, 'The United States and the Liquidation of the British Empire in Tropical Africa, 1941—51', in Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis eds., *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940—1960*, pp. 31—55, p. 37; Raymond Betts, *Uncertain Dimensions*, p. 44.

20. The role of western-educated intellectuals in the emergence of colonial nationalism (i.e. within the territorial boundaries of a given colony) has been stressed by several authors. For the early studies see M.L. Kilson Jr., 'Nationalism and Social Classes in West Africa' in Wallerstein, ed., *Social Change: The Colonial Situation*, pp. 533—50, p. 534. See also Raymond Betts, *Uncertain Dimensions*, p. 163.

21. Rupert Emerson and Martin Kilson, eds., *The Political Awakening of Africa*, New Jersey, 1964, p. 60. Nationalism may be broadly defined as a social and political movement of nationalities striving to acquire, maintain and enhance their status within a demarcated territorial space. For a similar definition see Louis Wirth, 'Types of Nationalism', *Journal of American Sociology*, 41:6 (1936) 723—37, p. 723.

22. See Martin L. Kilson, 'Nationalism and Social Classes in West Africa', in Wallerstein ed., *Social Change*, pp. 333—50. See also Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa*, London, 1964.

23. See the survey conducted by the Italian Consulate in Eritrea on the Italians and their economic activities: Consolato Generale d'Italia, *Gli italiani in Eritrea nel 1958*, Asmara, 1958, p. 7.

24. Although biased, the study of Kennedy Trevaskis, *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition, 1941—52*, Oxford, 1960, still remains the only complete study for the story of the decolonization of Eritrea.

25. The conflict as a nationalist phenomenon has been studied by David Pool, 'Eritrean Nationalism', in *Nationalim and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa*, edited by I.M. Lewis, London, 1983, pp. 175—93 without, however, adquate treatment of its causes. Lloyd Ellingson's, 'The Origins and Development of the Eritrean Liberation Movement', in *The Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies*, Chicago, 1980, pp. 613—28 is limited to a straight forward narration. By far successful is the study by Geir Pedersen, 'From Ethiopian Irredentism to Eritrean Nationalism', in *Eritrea: Prognoses and Assessment of Africa's Longest War*, edited by Svein Ege and Tekeste Negash (forthcoming) where the author attempted to locate the causes of the conflict in the Eritreo-Ethiopian relations than to the impact of colonialism on Eritrean society.

APPENDIX I

FO 371/69364 Four Power Commission Report on Eritrea, 1948, Appendix 70.

Principal Pre-Occupation Industries (i.e. pre-1941).

Such information as is available indicates that the undernoted industries were established during the Italian regime:

i) *Flour mills*. There were five of these currently working which were established prior to the occupation, one in 1895, one in 1912, one in 1939, and two in 1940. Up to 1935, according to statistics available, Eritrea exported to Italian Somaliland and the Arabian Coast a considerable quantity of flour of wheat milled from grain largely imported from Ethiopia. It is reasonable to assume that the two old established mills were engaged in this trade as well as satisfying local demands. These five mills at the present time have combined potential output of 1050 tons of flour per month. All five are still in operation and are privately financed.

ii) *Pasta Manufactures*. The existence of two is known, one established in 1912, and the other in 1922. There is no evidence that any part of the produce of these factories was exported, and since their combined potential output at the moment is only 100 tons per month it must be assumed that they operated to fulfill local demands only. Both are still in operation and employ private capital.

iii) *Bread Bakeries*. Three of these were in operation in the Italian era, one established in 1935, one in 1936, and the third in 1939. Combined potential output is 160 tons per month all of which is absorbed locally. Raw materials are local and Ethiopian wheat. All three are still in operation and work on private capital.

iv) *Canned Meat, Salted Meat, and Meat Extract Factories.* Two of these existed, firstly, Torregiani, of whom particulars are lacking and, secondly, Caramelli, who was first established in 1925 and had a potential output of 10 to 15,000 tins of 300 gramms per day. Most of these was exported to Libya and Italy until 1935 when, it is stated, the entire output was supplied to the Italian armed forces in Eritrea. Raw materials used were local and Ethiopian cattle, and tinplate from Italy or Germany. The factory, which is financed by private capital, is not at present in operation but is shortly expected to recommence its activities.

v) *Tanneries.* The only ones known to exist prior to the occupation were that of Baldini established in 1938, and that at Debaroa established in 1940. Both together now have a potential output of 75 tons of leather per month. There is evidence that prior to 1934 very small quantities were exported, but it appears likely that the greater part of the produce was absorbed locally, doubtless by the native population. Raw materials were local and Ethiopian hides and skins, while tanning extract and chemicals were imported from abroad. Both employ private capital and are still in operation.

vi) *Vegetable Fibre Industry (Sisal and Sanseviera).* This industry was centered on Keren. About 200 tons of fibre per annum were exported over the period 1930/1935.

The original decorticating machinery is believed to have been wilfully destroyed immediately prior to the occupation, since then the industry has not been revived on a truly commercial basis.

vii) *Dumnut Blank and Button Factory.* This, owned by one De Rossi, was first established at Keren in 1927. There is evidence in the pre-1934 era of the exportation of both whole and sawn dumnuts. The present potential output is 243,000,000 buttons per month. The factory still operates entirely for export and employs private capital.

viii) *Cement Factory.* A publication of 1935 makes reference to such a factory at Asmara, but there are no available records to establish whether one existed or not. In 1937, however, a large cement factory was constructed at Massawa whose potential output was 3,500 tons per month, mainly destined for export. Raw materials were carbonate of lime, silica, and ferrous earth, all locally abundant. In 1945 the factory, which was operated by private capital, was closed down and transferred to the Sudan.

ix) *Massawa and Assab Salt Works.* The former commenced in 1906 and the latter some years later. These two with the Ras Hafum salt works (Italian Somaliland) enjoyed a salt monopoly in Eritrea and Somalia. After 1935 these three and the Jubuoti Salt works formed a Company which enjoyed a monopoly on the distribution of salt in Ethiopia. Potential output of Massawa salt works alone is 96,000 tons per annum — a quantity far in excess of the consumption of what was Italian East Africa. External trade statistics indicate that large quantities were exported, first to India, and subsequently, after that country had closed her market by giving tariff preference to Aden salt, to Japan. An average of more than 100,000 metric tons of salt per annum was exported from Eritrea during the four year period 1930—1933. Massawa salt works are still in operation and, it is stated, operated by private capital. Assab Salt Works were seriously damaged at the time of occupation since then they have not operated.

x) *Soap factory.* Known as S.A.P.E., this was first established in 1939. Raw materials are coconut oil from the Yemen and Aden, oils and fats of local origin, and caustic soda from the U.K..

xi) *Edible Oils Factory.* Two of these existed prior to the occupation, both established in 1937. The potential output of the former is at present 100 tons per month, of the latter 250 tons per month. Raw materials are oil-bearing seeds such as sesame, cotton, neuk etc., imported mainly from Ethiopia and the Sudan. Private capital is employed in both cases, and it is to be assumed that both factories produce for home consumption, there being no evidence that any part of the output was exported.

xii) *Pirelli Tyre Re-treading Plant.* — This, a branch of the Pirelli organisation in Italy, was first established in Eritrea in 1936 in order presumably to meet the needs of the growing transport fleet which had materialised as a vital adjunct to Italian development of East Africa. Raw materials are camelback from U.K., and cushion gum and rubber solution from U.S.A.. Present monthly capacity is 420 tyre re-treads, 250 tyre repairs and production of 250 transmission belts. The factory is stated to work on private capital. Since its inception it has devoted itself to the home market and has not engaged appreciably in the export trade.

(xiii) *Compounded Liquor Factory* — Known as L.E.A. it is an establishment started in 1939 for the production of various types of alcoholic beverages from pure alcohol and essences. Raw materials are alcohol (imported, prior to the occupation) locally

produced, and essences from abroad. Initially devoted to the home market but has subsequently exported, principally to Ethiopia. Present potential output is 6,000 litres of all types of alcoholic beverages per month. The establishment continues to function and employs private capital.

In addition to the foregoing, as is indicated by the number of industrial trade licences issued prior to the occupation, there were a number of smaller industries of the artisan type started in many cases on an experimental basis after the commencement of the expansionist programme in 1935. Examples of these are carriage building and painting, carpentering, wood-working, ice manufacturing, chemical products, wine and liquor manufacturing, manufacturing of building and constructional material. All such factories sprang up to meet the demands caused by the new policy of development of Italian East Africa as an economic whole.

APPENDIX II

A Note on Salaries and Prices of Basic Food Crops

1905

Daily Salaries in Lire.

Type of Work	Salaries for Eritreans	Salaries for Italians
manual	0.80 — 1.50	6.00
masonry	1.20 — 2.00	6.00 — 10.00
mining	0.80 — 1.00	5.00 — 10.00

Prices of food crops in lire per 100 kgs:
Taff, 20; barley, 15.00; wheat, 15.00; sorghum, 15.00.

Source: Bartolommei-Gioli, 'La colonizzazione dell'Eritrea', 1906, p. 251. See also Idem., and Checchi, M., 'La colonizzazione agricola dell'Eritrea', in *L'Eritrea economica*, edited by Martini, F., Novara, 1913, pp. 390—91.

1924

The devaluation of the lire vis-à-vis the M.T. thaler, i.e. the basic currency of exchange between Eritrea and Ethiopia, caused sharp rise in food-crop prices. Prices rose from c. 16 lire per 100 kgs to about 100 lire per 100 kgs. See AE 859, Circolare: Approvvigionamenti, dated 22.12.1924. The colonial government noted that salaries to the colonial soldier (maximum 2.50 lire daily) were not enough to purchase sufficient amount of food-crops to sustain a family.

1935

Salaries for Eritreans were for the first time regulated by a Governatorial decree of 25.2.1935 no. 7079 in the following manner.

Skilled workers, 10.00 — 12.00 lire daily; drivers, 12.00 — 16.00 lire daily; manual workers in general, 3.00 — 5.00 lire daily; children under eighteen, 2.00 — 5.00 lire daily. During this period, daily wages for skilled Italians were fixed at 35 lire and at 25 lire for the non-skilled.

Food-crop prices in lire per 100kgs.
Taff, 150.00 — 160.00 lire; barley, 60.00 lire; sorghum, 120.00 lire.

Source: 'Il problema dei salari della mano d'opera di colore nel periodo pre e post-bellico', *L'agricoltura coloniale*, 30:12 (1936) p. 5.

1937

Salaries for Eritreans were revised by a Governatorial decree of 9.10.1937 thus:

Drivers, 12 lire; skilled workers, 9 lire; manual workers, 7 lire; children from the age of eleven, 2.50 lire.

Source: Ministero dell'Africa Italiana, *Codice del lavoro dell'Africa Italiana, primo supplemento*, Roma, 1939, p. 35.

Salaries for the Eritrean colonial soldiers were established in Rome. According to the R.D. of 1.12.1892:

Zaptie	1.85 — 2.25 lire daily.
Ascari	1.50 — 2.60
Muntaz	2.20 — 2.50
Buluk-Bash	2.70 — 3.50
Shum-Bash	5.00 — 6.00

These were reduced considerably during the period of Governor Martini, 1897—1907. In 1905, salaries for colonial soldiers were nearly half from what they were in 1892. See *Ordinamento amministrativo per la colonia Eritrea*, R.D. 22.9.1905 no. 507, article 120.

By 1935 salaries of colonial soldiers approximated those of 1892. The *Ordinamento per il Regio Corpo di truppe coloniali dell'Eritrea* issued as R.D. 17.12.1931, article 65, established the salary scale:

Ascari	2.00 — 2.80 lire daily
Muntaz	3.00 — 3.40
Buluk-Bash	4.00 — 4.80
Shum-Bash	5.00 — 5.80

The Italian lire was subject to a serious devaluation vis-à-vis the US dollar. The exchange rate had gone up from five lire to a US dollar (1914) to 27 lire to a US dollar in 1927. See Clough, S., *The Economic History of Modern Italy*, Columbia, 1964, pp. 197—98.

Eritrean Import/Export Trade in Thousands of Lire

Year	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Year*	*Imports*	*Exports*
1900	9,376	2,745	1917	50,089	26,158
1901	9,342	2,759	1918	103,811	85,254
1902	7,990	2,711	1919	95,536	37,663
1903	9,037	4,077	1920	95,185	67,263
1904	10,725	5,763	1921	61,862	33,998
1905	12,909	6,772	1922	87,781	31,623
1906	12,181	4,226	1923	106,294	40,394
1907	12,728	4,310	1924	146,129	87,901
1908	11,433	5,622	1925	203,453	119,462
1909	20,378	9,997	1926	171,789	97,854
1910	20,230	11,135	1927	201,536	81,566
1911	20,512	11,470	1928	195,627	93,712
1912	24,079	14,606	1929	207,503	72,499
1913	23,349	14,485	1930	176,814	76,219
1914	29,433	13,113	1931	186,825	69,063
1915	29,469	19,850	1932	173,035	59,194
1916	21,614	11,868	1933	176,565	62,490

Source: Compiled from *Statistica del movimento commerciale marittimo e carovaniero dell'Eritrea, 1900—1933*; Checchi, M., *Movimento commerciale della colonia Eritrea*, p. 8; Piccioli, A., *La nuova Italia d'oltremare*, p. 1618; Santagata, F., *La colonia Eritrea*, p. 166. These figures include the value of goods imported to and exported from Ethiopia via Massawa. The pre-1918 import/export figures are presented in several forms, e.g. with and/or without transit trade.

Total Enrolment of Students in Government Schools 1921—22 —— 1939—40

Year	*Enrolment*
1921—22	260
1922—23	320
1932—24	340
1924—25	340
1925—26	360
1926—27	360
1927—28	400
1928—29	1,100
1929—30	1,200
1930—31	1,420
1931—32	1,400
1932—33	1,483
1933—34	1,985
1934—35	2,130
1935—36*	
1936—37	2,751**
1937—38	3,400**
1939—40	4,177**
1940—41	c.5,000**

* All schools closed for the entire academic year due to the Italo-Ethiopian war.

** Total enrolment throughout Great Eritrea.

Sources: For the 1921—22 to 1932—33, Piccioli, A., *La nuova Italia d'oltremare*, Firenze, 1933, p. 1149; for 1933—34 to 1936— 37, ASMAI, vol. 3, pacco 37, busta 4, Divisione centrale delle scuole primarie; for 1937—38 to 1938—39, Annuario delle colonie italiane, Roma, 1939, p.613; for 1939—40, Festa, A., 50 scuole primarie; 7000 allievi in Eritrea, in ASMAI, vol. 3.

ACS-MAI,	Archivio Centrale di stato (Rome) — Ministero dell'AFrica Italiana
AE	Archivio Eritrea
Africa	Journal of the International African Institute, London
Africa (Rome)	Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto Italo-Africano, Rome
AP	Atti parlamentari, Camera dei deputati
ASMAE, AA. PP.	Archivio storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Affari Politici
ASMAI	Archivio storico del Ministero dell'Africa Italiana
BUCE	Bollettino Ufficiale della Colonia Eritrea
FO	Foreign Office (Great Britain)
FPC	Four Power Commission
GHQ MEF	General Headquarters, Middle East Forces (Great Britain)
MAE	Ministero degli Affari Esteri (Italy)
MC	Ministero delle Colonie (Italy)
M.T.	Maria Theresa Thaler
R.D.	Regio Decreto
WO	War Office (Great Britain)

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Archivio Eritrea (AE), Rome

Shipped from Eritrea in 1947. AE has since then been deposited as a separate archive with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome. AE contains 1,200 'pacchi' (boxes). Only those files of which material used in this study are included in the list below. The need for a thorough reorganization of the AE is recognized but has been delayed due to lack of funds. Considerable material transferred in the 1950's to an internal archive known as the 'archivio comitato' has not yet been returned to AE. Due to the fifty years closure rule, access to AE was limited to those files up to 1934. In 1981 the numbering system was changed without however suppressing the old system thus creating a real problem of correct citation. Unless otherwise mentioned, the post 1981 numbering system has been used.

AE 41, 173, 151, 164, 281, 300, 319, 370, 373, 402, 403, 499, 502, 531, 539, 552, 565, 570, 575, 593, 612, 613, 626, 627, 681, 720, 724, 773, 793, 808, 859, 861, 911, 935, 941, 947, 950, 953, 979, 981, 1008, 1037, 1062, 1081.

Archivio storico del Ministero dell'Africa Italiana (ASMAI), Rome

This archive of the former Ministry of Colonies is also deposited with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome. The files on Eritrea contain more material on Ethiopian and Ethiopian affairs gathered from Eritrea rather than on Eritrean affairs. The fifty year closure rule applies to ASMAI as well. Since many of AE and ASMAI files contain material stretching over several decades, the fifty year closure rule has been used indiscriminately.

ASMAI, position 2/2, 3/1, 3/5, 3/6, 3/7, 3/8, 3/9, 3/19, 3/20, 3/22, 3/24, 3/23, 3/26, 6/1, 11/7, 11/8, 12/7 12/3, 12/4, 12/9, 18/1,18/2, 24/1, 24/2, 33/1, 33/2, 35/7, 35/17, 35/18, 35/19, 54/16, 54/22, 54/23, 54/24, 54/26, 54/30, 54/31, 115/1, 115/2, 181/1, 181/9, 181/12, 181/13, 181/60, 181/46, 186/1.

Archivio storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Rome

The archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. With the establishment of the Ministry of Colonies in 1912, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ceased to interest itself with

Eritrea. Eritrean material is located under Ethiopia. The most relevant files consulted were

ASMAE, Affari politici, Etiopia, Pacco 1020: Etiopia, busta 4—5.

Archivio del comitato per la documentazione delle attivitá italiane in Africa (Archivio 'comitato'), Rome

In 1952, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Italian Africa organized an official committee composed of scholars and colonial exerpts to document Italian activities in Africa. For this purpose an internal archive (archivio comitato) was created by transferring selected material from the AE and ASMAI. An inventory of the material held was prepared in 1982. The files on Italian educational activites in Eritrea, to which the author had the privilige to consult, are located under ASMAI, Inventario vol. 3, busta 37.

Archivio Centrale dello stato, (ACS), Rome

In the Central State Archive the following archives have been consulted:

— Archivo Ferdinando Martini (Governor of Eritrea, 1897—1907).

— Fondo Piero Badoglio — Chief of the Italian Armed Forces, the head of the Italian forces in the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935—36 and the first governor-general of East African Empire

— Fondo General Rodolfo Graziani, Vice-roy of Italian East Africa Empire, May 1936 — December 1937. Graziani's papers remain the only sources easily accessible for the post 1935 period.

— Fondo Ministero dell'Africa Italiana (ACS-MAI). This archive of the former ministry of colonies, fell into the hands of the Allies who then handed them to the Central State Archive.

Public Records Office, London

Most of the material on British Military Administration in Eritrea from 1941 up to 1949 is kept in the War Office (WO) files. Eritrean material is located in WO 230. From 1949 and until the end of British mandate in September 1952, Eritrea was administered by the Foreign Office. The material is located in FO 371.

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